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Convinced that God had Called Us

Dreams, Visions and the Perception
of God's Will in Luke-Acts

by

John B.F. Miller



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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J.B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton, 1969.
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1972–
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BDAG	Bauer, W., F.W. Danker, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3d ed.
BDB	Brown, F., S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> .
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BjRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
Comm	<i>Communio</i>
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
ER	<i>Ecumenical Review</i>
Expl	<i>Explorations</i>
HDB	<i>Harvard Divinity Bulletin</i>
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IG	<i>Inscriptiones graecae</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JITC	<i>Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
OLD	Glare, P.G.W. <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> . Oxford, 1982.
OT	Old Testament
OTA	Old Testament Apocrypha
<i>OTP</i>	Charlesworth, James H. <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. New York, 1983.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra pagina
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley, and D.E. Green. 12 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

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INTRODUCTION

Dream-visions¹ occur in several crucial passages in Luke-Acts. The annunciations to Zechariah² and Mary, Jesus' transfiguration, Saul's conversion, and the Cornelius-Peter episode all prominently feature visionary experiences with heavenly intermediaries. Indeed, Luke³ employs visions more frequently than any other New Testament author.⁴ Despite these facts, there have been relatively few studies of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts.⁵ Even fewer attempts have been made to analyze the overall function of dream-visions in Luke's narrative.⁶

¹ On the use of this hyphenated term, see pp. 8–9 below.

² According to the convention of *The SBL Handbook of Style For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* ([Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999], 3), I will follow the NRSV for proper names in the Bible. All other translations in this study are my own, unless otherwise noted.

³ I will use "Luke" throughout to refer to the implied author of Luke-Acts, without reference to any particular theory of Lukan authorship. My use of the terms "implied author" and "implied reader" is based on Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 147–151.

⁴ See, for example, the statistical treatment in Robert Morganthaler, *Statistik des Neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zurich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1958). Three of the four NT uses of ὄπτασία and eleven of the twelve uses of ὄραμα are found in Luke-Acts (*Statistik*, 126). Even though one could argue that the whole of Revelation is an extended dream-vision report, one still finds terminology referring to dream-visions more frequently in Luke-Acts. On the question of terminology, see pp. 8–9 below.

⁵ This silence is due, at least in part, to an overlap with other categories of investigation. Many of the more interesting dream-vision passages in Luke-Acts are often classified as "annunciation narratives" or "call/commissioning narratives." See, for example, Raymond Brown's "Luke's Method in the Annunciation Narratives of Chapter One" (in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* [ed. Charles Talbert; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978], 126–138), and Benjamin Hubbard's "The Role of Commissioning Accounts in Acts" (pp. 187–198 in the same volume). Dream-vision stories form a broader category than annunciation or call narratives. Furthermore, annunciation and call narratives can, but do not always, include a visionary element. The question here becomes one of focus. Albeit hyperbolic, Shawn Kelley's assertion that "[t]here has been virtually no critical scholarship on the Lukan vision scenes as vision scenes" is telling ("And Your Young Will See Visions": A Functional Literary Reading of the Visions to Saul and Peter in Acts" [Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1991], 11). Although there have been a few studies of which Kelley was unaware (e.g., John Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2:1395–1427), dream-visions remain a largely unexplored topic within Lukan scholarship. The few exceptions will be discussed below in chapter 2.

⁶ The only attempt at such a comprehensive study has been produced by Michael

This relative silence in Lukan scholarship is particularly striking when one considers the significance of dream-visions in this text. Divine communication is pervasive throughout Luke and Acts, and dream-visions often serve as the vehicle for this communication. They are, therefore, inherently important for understanding Luke's theology—a theology characterized by God's persistent and active involvement in the events of human history. In a number of cases, Luke also depicts various characters interpreting their visionary experiences. With this concurrent emphasis on the human response to divine communication, the dream-visions in this narrative reveal something about Luke's anthropology. Indeed, to the extent that Luke's dream-vision scenes include both divine irruption into human experience and human perception of divine activity, they mark an intersection between Luke's theology and anthropology. As the title suggests, the present study is concerned with both of these elements, focusing on the relationship between visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts. In order to determine that relationship, this study will examine the ways in which characters respond to their visionary encounters. It will be argued that Luke's use of dream-visions resists simple categorization. In some cases, characters respond more or less automatically to their visionary encounters and do exactly as they are directed. In other cases, however, characters interpret their dream-visions, attempting to make sense of their visionary experience and attempting to discern the will of God through that experience. As a prelude to this examination, it will be helpful to discuss some of the literary and theological questions that have shaped the present investigation. After sketching this background, I will discuss how dream-visions are defined in this study, the methodology employed to examine Luke's presentation of this phenomenon, and the content of the present investigation.

Literary and Theological Significance

Literary Significance

Given the prominence and frequency of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, one may rightly inquire into the significance of these dream-visions

James Day in "The Function of Post-Pentecost Dream/Vision Reports in Acts" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994).

for Luke's story. Questions of their importance and general function within the narrative are especially inviting. Unfortunately, comprehensive answers to these deceptively simple questions are elusive.⁷ Luke's dream-visions are marked by such variety that generalizations become difficult.

Some recent studies of Lukan dream-vision scenes have drawn interesting and convincing conclusions about how particular dream-visions function.⁸ Unfortunately, however compelling these conclusions may be for the dream-visions they address, they cannot be applied to all of Luke's dream-visions as a body. One such study notes the directive quality of the post-Pentecost visions in Acts.⁹ Although the dream-visions in Acts could all be described as directive in nature,¹⁰ this same conclusion cannot be applied to all of the dream-vision scenes in Luke's Gospel.¹¹ Another study has demonstrated that the visions in Acts 9–

⁷ This may explain why the few studies that have been conducted tend to focus on dream-visions in a particular chapter or section of Acts.

⁸ Earlier studies of Lukan dream-visions, spanning roughly the first three quarters of the twentieth century, reflect the concerns of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule and form criticism. Excellent examples of this scholarship are found in the respective works of Wikenhauser and Hanson. These studies will be examined in chapter 2. Since they do not address the issues of function, I have not included them in this section.

⁹ Day, "Post-Pentecost Dream/Vision Reports." Day suggests that all of the dream-vision scenes in Acts following the Pentecost episode can be categorized according to four different functions: some offer divine directives; some lead to the conversion or calling of a character; some provide assurance; and others offer supernatural confirmation of a character (85–89). To be clear, reducing these four categories under the single label "divine directive" is my own argument. That is, the first of Day's categories really encompasses the other three, and it is more helpful to collapse these four groups. In one way or another, each of the dream-vision scenes in Acts is marked by some sense of divine direction. Those visions that result in a character being converted or called always include a divine directive, as do those that have the ostensible purpose of assuring a character. Lastly, the visions that are adduced as evidence of the fourth category really just amount to character retellings of visions that were originally directive in nature. Day's study, along with all the others mentioned in this section, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

¹⁰ The message delivered in Acts 1:10–11, for example, has been described as a rebuke of the apostles for standing around when they should be following Jesus' instructions to serve as his witnesses (Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* [2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986 and 1990], 2:19).

¹¹ The visions in Luke seem to be of a slightly different flavor. Although there is a certain amount of direction in Gabriel's annunciations to Zechariah and Mary, these passages are much more focused on what John and Jesus will do, or, more important, what God will do through them. The visions at Jesus' baptism and Luke 10:18 are particularly non-directive. This is also true of the questionable passage in Luke 22, featuring an angel that appears "to strengthen" Jesus at the beginning of the passion. In

11 help create narrative suspense.¹² They do.¹³ Other dream-visions in Acts, however, function in exactly the opposite way, decreasing suspense at critical points in Luke's story.¹⁴

Approaching the question of importance and literary function from another angle, one may look at studies of broader Lukan themes that include Luke's dream-visions. Two recent studies of miracle and providence, for example, come to essentially the same conclusion: the dream-visions in Luke-Acts emphasize the fact that God's plan is being worked out within the events of this narrative.¹⁵ Indeed, as one examines the remarkable variety of vision scenes in Luke-Acts, this observation alone seems to grasp the only common thread running through all of Luke's dream-visions. Despite different participants, circumstances, and emphases, all of Luke's visionary scenes relate somehow to the focus on God's plan in the narrative. Although it is true that the irruptive nature of dream-visions emphasizes the importance of the plan of God in Luke's story, it is also true that the payoff of this observation is minimal. Luke's visions do witness the importance of God's plan, but this observation alone cannot explain Luke's fascinating and varied depiction of dream-visions as a mode of divine communication. The problem with this observation, therefore, is that it reduces all of Luke's visionary scenes to their lowest common denominator.

From a literary perspective, it is important to notice that Luke's dream-visions resist simple, general categorization. The singular common element found in every one of the visionary scenes in the narrative belies the complexity and nuance so many of these scenes exhibit. Any

order to find a rubric for understanding and explaining Luke's use of visions, therefore, one must look beyond the idea of divine direction.

¹² David Allan Handy, "The Gentile Pentecost: A Literary Study of the Story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1 – 11:18)" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary [Richmond], 1998), esp. 73–95.

¹³ The culmination of Saul's vision in Acts 9:6, for example, is Jesus' command: "get up and enter the city; you will be told what is necessary for you to do." Of course, the reader waits in vain for such instructions, which do not occur except in Paul's later recapitulations of the experience in Acts 22 and 26.

¹⁴ This is true particularly of the visions experienced by Paul in Acts 23 and 27, in which turbulent scenes of trial and travel are interrupted by visions reassuring both the narrative audience and the reading audience that Paul's life will not end in Jerusalem or on a sinking ship.

¹⁵ Howard Clark Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 208–210; and John Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTMS 76; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 112–120.

comprehensive treatment of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts, therefore, must take into account both the focus on the plan of God that each scene brings to the narrative and the role that each scene plays individually in Luke's story. Luke's variegated presentation of visionary experiences as a form of divine communication is striking, and this variety is found on both ends of the revelatory experience. These dream-visions depict divine communication coming through manifold intermediaries: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, angels, and even Moses and Elijah communicate with the people in Luke's story. Perhaps even more interesting are the varying human responses to these experiences, and the ways in which this pattern of communication and response are worked out in the narrative. Thus, new questions emerge. What is communicated in the Lukan vision scenes? How do people respond to this communication? These questions, in turn, raise some very interesting theological issues.

Theological Significance

There can be no question that Luke's narrative is far more than an entertaining story. At every turn in the plot, one finds a focus on God, God's plan, and the way that people understand and respond to their perception of that plan. Luke's dream-visions provide vivid imagery depicting God at work *within* the scenes of human history. One could go even further to suggest that this imagery also evokes a broader sense of God at work *behind* the scenes of human history.¹⁶ This depiction of God's direct involvement is noteworthy. As François Bovon observes: "A la différence de plusieurs auteurs juifs contemporains et des apologistes du second siècle, Luc ne s'intéresse guère au côté insondable et ineffable de Dieu."¹⁷ Luke does not portray God as an elusive, distant entity, but as an active participant in human events.

If it is true that all of Luke's dream-visions relate to the focus on God's plan within the story, then one can say that they are particularly important for understanding Lukan theology. Indeed, Luke's theology

¹⁶ The reader gets such an impression when comparing passages like Luke 1:28–37 and Acts 2:23. Given Luke's frequent allusions to the OT, it is somewhat surprising how different Luke's vision scenes are compared with some of the more noteworthy prophetic visions like Isa 6. Luke's visions do not dwell on the majesty of God *per se*, but instead focus entirely on God's plan for, and involvement in, human history.

¹⁷ François Bovon, "L'Importance des Médiations dans le Projet Théologique de Luc," *NTS* 21 (1975): 31.

has been severely criticized precisely on this point by Ernst Haenchen and Richard Pervo. Commenting specifically on the dream-visions in the Cornelius–Peter episode, Haenchen claimed that Luke’s use of visions is tantamount to making God a master puppeteer, “twitching” human subjects in order to carry out the divine plan.¹⁸ Pervo takes up Haenchen’s criticism in his attempt to demonstrate that Acts, like other ancient novels, portrays a rigidly providential world view because the audiences of these texts demanded it: “Their audiences do not wish to be told that they are responsible for their own troubles. Rather than seeking growth of character through acceptance of responsibility for one’s fate, the ‘immature reader’ prefers a beneficent providence.”¹⁹ Haenchen’s somewhat understated criticism, “Here stands revealed a peculiarity of Lucan theology which can scarcely be claimed as a point in its favour,”²⁰ is summarized more bluntly by Pervo: “Cultivated minds can weary of all this.”²¹

Before moving on to the theological implications of this criticism, it is important to note a key assumption underlying these observations. The comments above presume that dreams and visions were regarded consistently in the ancient world as a reliable form of divine communication. Unfortunately, this assumption has been supported by generalizations in a few of the studies devoted to dream-visions in antiquity.²² Although this understanding of dream-visions holds true generally, there is significant counterevidence indicating an undercurrent of suspicion toward the reliability of dreams and visions. The evidence for this undercurrent begins with Homer and some of the biblical evidence and runs through the imperial period. Because so many of the dream-visions described in ancient literature do treat this experience as a reliable form of communication from God or the gods, dream-visions

¹⁸ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Noble et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 362. This claim will be examined more fully in chapter 2 below.

¹⁹ Richard Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 74. On the other hand, it should also be noted that a number of scholars have contended against Haenchen’s conclusions about the Cornelius–Peter episode in Acts 10–11 (see, for example, the extensive references to the work of Robert Tannehill and Edith Humphrey in the discussion of Acts 10–11 found in chapter 5 below).

²⁰ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 362.

²¹ Pervo, *Profit*, 74.

²² See the discussion of the work of Morton Kelsey and John Hanson in chapter 2 below.

in literature are often viewed as a *deus ex machina*, giving direction and quelling doubt or indecision. An investigation of the counterevidence, however, indicates a broad spectrum of beliefs regarding dreams and visions in antiquity.²³ It is necessary, therefore, to examine each piece of evidence individually. The dream-visions in Luke-Acts, therefore, must be evaluated according to how they function in the context of Luke's theological narrative.

For the most part, the dream-visions in Luke-Acts are presented as divine communication. Therefore, the criticisms noted above raise a significant theological question: To what extent do dream-visions obviate the role of human theological discernment in Luke-Acts? A positive answer to this question seems logical. If dream-visions mark an irruption of the divine presence into human affairs, it would seem reasonable to assume they provide guidance in a way that circumvents human deliberation and decision. Some of Luke's dream-vision scenes do just that. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–39, for example, depicts a unilateral dream-vision experience. An “angel of the Lord,” and later “the Spirit,” tell Philip what to do and he does it;²⁴ the result is that the eunuch responds favorably to the gospel. There are, however, more complex dream-visions in Luke-Acts that involve a more complicated human response. The prophetic songs of Mary and Zechariah in Luke 1 provide interpretations of their visionary experiences.²⁵ These interpretations, in turn, establish expectations that must be reshaped during the course of the narrative. Likewise, Peter and Paul retell their visions in a way that often discloses their own interpretation based on other experiences (Acts 11:1–18; 22:6–21; 26:12–18). Perhaps the most dynamic example is Paul's *ὄραμα* at Troas, narrated in Acts 16:9–10. This dream-vision is unique precisely because God is never mentioned until the characters in the story have to interpret Paul's experience. Luke's use of dream-visions, therefore, is far from monochromatic. Some of his dream-visions are fairly simple, some are more nuanced. Combining the aforementioned literary questions with this theological and anthropological issue of visions and human discernment, one may ask: What is the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts? This question drives the present investigation.

²³ Chapter 1 provides an analysis of this evidence.

²⁴ See chapter 5 for a detailed treatment of this passage.

²⁵ See chapter 4 below.

*Definitions and Distinctions**Terminology*

It is necessary at the onset to define terminology carefully and determine what constitutes a dream-vision in Luke-Acts. The most comprehensive treatment of visions in the NT thus far can be found in the work of John S. Hanson. Hanson's 1978 Harvard dissertation, "The Dream-Vision Report and Acts 10:1 – 11:18: A Form-Critical Study," along with the more broadly focused "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," appearing in *ANRW* in 1980, established him as a leading figure in the critical investigation of the dream-vision material in antiquity.²⁶ Hanson's work is very helpful for defining and delimiting the dream-vision scenes of Luke-Acts.

Perhaps the most obvious way to define a vision is by the use of explicit visionary terminology. In his 1980 study, Hanson provides the following catalogue of terminology used to describe dreams and visions in Greek literature: ἀποκάλυψις, ἐνύπνιον, ἐπιφάνεια, ὄναρ/ὄνειρος, ὄπτασία, ὄραμα, ὄρασις, ὄψις, φαντασία, φάντασμα, φάσμα.²⁷ Of these, ἐπιφάνεια, ὄναρ/ὄνειρος, ὄψις, φάντασμα, and φάσμα may be eliminated from consideration in the present study, since they do not occur in Luke-Acts. Contextual examination also eliminates the single use of φαντασία (Acts 25:23), and the several uses of ἀποκάλυψις and its verbal form ἀποκαλύπτω. There remain four terms that will be useful for the present discussion: ἐνύπνιον, ὄπτασία, ὄραμα, and ὄρασις.²⁸ As Hanson observes, it is not unusual for an author to prefer one term over others.²⁹ This is the case with Luke, who strongly prefers the term ὄραμα.³⁰ Thus, the first criterion for determining whether a vision is

²⁶ See, for example, references to Hanson's work in Handy, "The Gentile Pentecost," 24; and Day, "The Function of Post-Pentecost Dream/Vision Reports," 2. Hanson's work has also influenced the study of dream-visions in other literature. See, for example, Robert Karl Gnuse's *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradition-Historical Analysis* (AGJU 36; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 100 and passim. Hanson's dissertation and *ANRW* article are discussed more fully in chapter 2 below.

²⁷ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1407–1408.

²⁸ Without detracting from their importance, one should note that Luke only uses ἐνύπνιον and ὄρασις in the quotation from Joel in Acts 2:17.

²⁹ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1408.

³⁰ See Acts 7:31, 9:10, 9:12, 10:3, 10:17, 10:19, 11:5, 12:9, 16:9, 16:10, and 18:9. Luke does not use ὄραμα in the Gospel, where ὄπτασία is found twice (Luke 1:22 and 24:23).

being described will be based on terminology. Those stories in Luke-Acts that employ explicit dream-vision terminology will be regarded as dream-visions.

These terms also call attention to the question of a distinction between “dream” and “vision.” In English, one may distinguish these experiences in modern usage. This distinction is based usually on whether the one having the experience is asleep (“dream”) or awake (“vision”). Such a distinction, however, is not so common in the literature of late antiquity that is preserved in Greek. Hanson observes that the available evidence suggests a “basic pattern in dream-vision terminology, namely, a fairly loose application of a variety of terms that can mean ‘dream’ or ‘vision’ or both. The preceding terminological observations ... indicate the difficulty, if not impossibility, of distinguishing between a dream and a vision.”³¹ Hanson, therefore, adopts the hyphenated expression “dream-vision” to translate such terminology in his study.³² The ambiguity suggested by Hanson is supported by the evidence in Luke-Acts. In Acts 10:3, Cornelius sees a vision (ὄραμα) while praying.³³ In 16:9, a vision (ὄραμα) appears to Paul during the night (διὰ νυκτός)—presumably indicating a dream Paul had while sleeping.³⁴ Because of this linguistic ambiguity, the present study will employ the terms “dream-vision,” “dream,” and “vision” interchangeably.

Luke also has Paul use ὀπτασία to describe his own visionary experience in Acts 26:19. There are no grounds, however, for making a distinction between Luke’s use of the terms ὀπτασία and ὄραμα (*contra* Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium* [HTKNT 3; Freiburg: Herder, 1969], 1:32 n. 39).

³¹ Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1408. One may note, for example, Herodotus’ interchangeable use of ὄψις (literally “vision”) and ὄνειρον in *Hist.* 7.14 to describe a “dream” that appears to Xerxes during his sleep. Hanson’s assertion is a general one—and generally, it holds true. It is important to note, however, that some ancient authors did not use these terms interchangeably. Dream interpreters like Artemidorus, for instance, distinguish between varying types of dream experience. (See the discussion of Artemidorus in chapter 1 below.)

³² Ibid.

³³ The context of prayer is given only later in 10:30.

³⁴ See also Acts 18:9: εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος ἐν νυκτὶ δι’ ὀράματος τῷ Παύλῳ (“Through a dream in the night, the Lord said to Paul ...”).

Contextual Considerations

“Appearances”

Explicit terminology is helpful for distinguishing dream-vision episodes in the narrative. There are a number of passages in Luke-Acts, however, that closely resemble other dream-vision reports *except* that they contain none of the explicit terms noted above (ἀποκάλυψις, ἐνύπνιον, ἐπιφάνεια, ὄναρ/ὄνειρος, ὄπτασία, ὄραμα, ὄρασις, ὄψις, φαντασία, φάντασμα, φάσμα). To limit this discussion of Luke’s visionary material to those passages containing this explicit terminology would be to pose an arbitrary and ultimately counterproductive restriction on the present investigation. Indeed, the Lukan narrative itself resists such restrictions. In Luke 1:11, for example, one finds the following description: “an angel of the Lord appeared (ὤφθη) to him [Zechariah], standing to the right of the altar of incense.” Despite the lack of any visionary terminology, this description is almost identical to those of other angelic visitations in which Luke does use vision terminology.³⁵ Moreover, when Zechariah emerges mute from the sanctuary, Luke uses a dream-vision term to summarize the reaction of the crowd: “The people were waiting for Zechariah, and were surprised at how long he had been in the Temple. When he came out and was unable to speak to them, they knew that he had seen a vision (ὄπτασία) in the Temple” (Luke 1:21–22).³⁶ This same pattern recurs with the appearance of the two “men” to the women at the tomb in Luke 24:4–7. When the two travelers on the road to Emmaus unknowingly recount this story to the risen Jesus, the women’s experience is described as “a vision of angels” (ὄπτασίαν ἀγγέλων [24:23]). It is necessary, therefore, to include in the present discussion of Luke’s dream-visions those stories in which otherworldly figures appear to the human characters in the narrative.

³⁵ Cf. Acts 10:3, where the term ὄραμα is employed.

³⁶ Thus, Joseph Fitzmyer observes that the aorist passive of ὁράω “is often used (as in Luke 1:11; 24:34; Acts 7:2, 26, 30, 35; 9:17; 13:31; 16:9; 26:16) to denote various epiphanies or theophanies” (*The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998], 238).

General “Auditions”

For modern readers, the category of “appearances” may connect somewhat fluidly with the idea of “vision.” More difficult, however, are those stories sometimes characterized as “auditions”: experiences in which all interaction with the divine or otherworldly figure occurs on an aural level.³⁷ There is a logical, etymological difficulty with the idea of calling an auditory experience a “vision.” The Latin noun (*visio*), from which the English noun developed, is based on the verb *video*, just as the Greek ὄραμα is derived from the verb ὁράω. In their most basic definitions, all of these words refer to the act of “seeing.” How, then, can one refer to an experience in which nothing is “seen” as a “vision”?

The justification for including auditory encounters within the category of dream-visions is that ancient authors, Luke included, used vision terminology to describe these experiences. That is, there are some “visions” that contain no visual element, but instead feature only a spoken message. The best example in the Lukan narrative is found in Acts 9:10. This passage describes the Lord “speaking” (λέγω) to Ananias “in a vision” (ἐν ὁράματι). There is no “visual” element in the description of Ananias’ experience (Acts 9:10–16), yet Luke characterizes the experience as a ὄραμα.³⁸ Far from unique, Luke’s use is in keeping with other descriptions of auditory dream-visions in ancient literature.

Auditory dream-visions are so common in the literature of antiquity that Hanson includes a distinct category for this type of dream-vision in his taxonomy of forms. He supports this decision in the following comment: “It should also be noted that not only did no specific terminology for auditions develop, but that even where the dream-vision proper is only auditory visual terminology prevails.”³⁹ As an example,

³⁷ Dennis Hamm, for example, characterizes Saul’s experience on the road to Damascus in the following way: “He falls to the ground and experiences what must be called an audition rather than a vision because the content is an aural/oral exchange that occurs while he has his eyes closed” (“Paul’s Blindness and Its Healing: Clues to Symbolic Intent [Acts 9; 22 and 26],” *Bib* 71 [1990]: 64).

³⁸ Hanson notes this same pattern in Acts 18:9 (“Dreams and Visions,” 1412).

³⁹ Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1411. Thus, it is both unnecessary and unhelpful to go to the lengths of symbolic interpretation that Hamm employs: “This two-level use of [ζύγε] prepares the reader to hear the ironic dimension of [ἀνεφωγμένων δὲ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ] in v. 8: though he could see nothing physically, his eyes were indeed opened. . . . This very interpretation is the one Luke has Barnabas make at 9, 27, when, introducing Saul to the disciples in Jerusalem, he ‘declared to them how on the road *he had seen the Lord*’. Though the experience was *physically* an audition rather than a vision,

he cites a passage from Plutarch's *Agesilaus* in which "Agesilaus tells his friends what he has seen (διηγησάμενος τοῖς φίλοις τὰ φανέντα), even though the report of the dream-vision gives no evidence that anything was seen."⁴⁰

Perhaps the most important comparative evidence for the study of dream-visions in Luke-Acts is the similar material in Jewish Scripture. Much of the prophetic literature in the OT opens with visionary language.⁴¹ In most cases, the prophecies that follow concern the "word of the Lord."⁴² Sometimes these prophecies lack any reference at all to "visual" elements.⁴³ Even more pertinent to Luke-Acts are the theophanies of Genesis and Exodus. The direct allusion to Gen 15:8 in Luke 1:18 indicates Luke's familiarity with this text.⁴⁴ This story begins with the phrase, "the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, *saying* (ἐγενήθη ῥῆμα κυρίου πρὸς Ἀβραμ ἐν ὁράματι λέγων)" (Gen 15:1). The only "visual" element of this experience occurs in Gen 15:17 and has little to do with the primary emphasis of the passage. Still, this theophany is described as a vision (מַחְזָה / ὄραμα).⁴⁵ Also, Acts 9:10 may contain an allusion to the theophany to Abraham in Gen 22. At the scene of the *Akedah* in Gen 22:11, the "angel of the Lord calls" to Abraham. Abraham responds, "Behold, it is I" (ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐγώ). In Acts

he realized, in the end, that he had indeed (*spiritually*) seen the Lord" ("Paul's Blindness and Its Healing," 64).

⁴⁰ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1412, citing Plutarch, *Agesilaus* 6.5.

⁴¹ See, for example, Amos 1:1, Isa 1:1, Mic 1:1, Nah 1:1, Obad 1:1. Robert Wilson suggests that Judean prophecy in particular is marked by this visionary language (*Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 260–261).

⁴² The first five words of Obadiah (in the Hebrew text) illustrate this combination: "The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord ..." (וִיזִין עֲבַדְיָה כֹה־אָמַר יְהוָה / ὁρασις Ἀβδίου τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός).

⁴³ See, for example, Nahum and Obadiah.

⁴⁴ In Gen 15:8 (LXX), Abram asks "How will I know (κατὰ τί γνώσομαι) that I will inherit it?" Luke alludes to this passage in Zechariah's response to Gabriel: "how will I know (κατὰ τί γνώσομαι) this" (Luke 1:18). The evidence for reading this as a direct allusion is discussed in chapter 4.

⁴⁵ A number of commentators suggest that the use of מַחְזָה in the Hebrew text of Gen 15:1 indicates the late origin of this story. See, for example, the discussion of Claus Westermann (*Genesis 12–36: A Commentary* [trans. J.J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 209–231). Westermann even goes so far as to argue: "[Gen 15:17] does not contain any visionary traits; it is nothing but an enactment of an oath by God which Abraham experiences in full consciousness" (228). Walter Brueggemann's comments permit a broader understanding of "vision": "This is a vision, a disclosure that surprises old reality. We are struggling, as was Abraham, with the emergence of a certitude that is based not on human reasons but on a primal awareness that God is God" (*Genesis* [Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982], 143).

9:10, Ananias responds to the Lord's address with the same phrase; the only difference is that Luke adds the vocative *κύριε* at the end of Ananias' reply. Although theophanic material in the OT often contains dramatic visual elements, it is not uncommon for these experiences to be strictly auditory.⁴⁶ Luke's use of auditory dream-visions (i.e., those lacking a "visual" element), therefore, finds parallels in both biblical and non-biblical literature.

"Auditions" of the Holy Spirit

Auditory visionary experiences are numerous and significant in Luke-Acts. This is true particularly of the Holy Spirit's role in Acts. There are several texts in which the Spirit "speaks" to an individual or group.⁴⁷ Since Luke elsewhere refers to auditory experiences as "visions,"⁴⁸ this study will include passages describing communication from the Holy Spirit within the category of dream-visions. Admittedly, the inclusion of this material is problematic, since Luke never describes communication from the Holy Spirit with an explicit visionary term. Such passages are included in this examination for two reasons. First, it would be arbitrary to exclude communication from the Holy Spirit from this study, since all communication from non-human figures is otherwise included. More important, Luke occasionally imitates a pattern found in some OT theophanies that coalesce the actions of angels with the action of God. As Carol Newsom has observed:

Many of these narratives about the *mal'ak yhwēh* pose a long-standing problem of interpretation: what is the relationship between the messenger/angel of Yahweh and Yahweh? In many of the narratives the *mal'ak yhwēh* initially appears to be a distinct figure. But at some point in the account it appears as though Yahweh were personally present instead of the *mal'ak yhwēh*. In Gen 16:7, for example, when Hagar has run away from Sarai's cruel treatment, the text says that "a *mal'ak yhwēh* found her by a well in the wilderness." The two converse and the narrator again

⁴⁶ The parallels between Luke's dream-visions and OT theophanies raise a question about whether one should regard the stories in Luke as "theophanies" rather than "visions" or "dream-visions." Although there are a number of similarities, (e.g., both occasionally feature an "angel of the Lord"), I would suggest that Luke's use of his preferred term *ὁραμα* is broader in scope than are those passages usually identified as theophanies in the OT. The best example may be the description of Paul's dream-vision (*ὁραμα*) at Troas in Acts 16:9–10.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Acts 10:19 and 13:2.

⁴⁸ The examples noted above are Acts 9:10 and 18:9.

identifies the one who speaks with Hagar as a “*mal’ak yhwēh*” in vv 9, 10, and 11. But the words which the *mal’ak yhwēh* speaks in v. 10 (“I will multiply your descendants ...”) appear rather to be the first-person speech of Yahweh... v. 13 begins, “Hagar called the name of Yahweh who spoke with her, ‘You are a God of seeing.’”... The apparent interchangeability of the *mal’ak yhwēh* and Yahweh cannot be resolved by assuming the clumsy merging of two traditional stories. The same ambiguity occurs in many narratives (e.g., Gen 21:15–21; 22:11–12; 31:11–13; Exod 3:2–6; Judg 6:11–24).⁴⁹

Since the appearance of angels is described with explicit dream-vision terminology in Luke-Acts, those passages in which the actions of the Holy Spirit are blended with those of an angel make it difficult to exclude the Holy Spirit’s communication from this study. Two examples stand out. In Acts 8:26, “an angel of the Lord” tells Philip to get up and go to the road leading to Gaza. Three verses later, it is the “Spirit” who tells Philip to join the eunuch’s chariot. Even more striking is a comparison between Acts 10:5–6 and 10:20. In Acts 10:3, the reader is told that Cornelius saw “in a vision ... an angel of God” (ἐν ὁράματι ... ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ). This angel tells Cornelius in vv. 5–6 to send men to Joppa to fetch Peter. In Acts 10:19–20, while Peter is still confused about his own vision, in which he is commanded to kill and eat unclean animals, the “Spirit” (πνεῦμα) tells him: “There are three men looking for you... . Go with them without questioning, *for I have sent them.*” It was an angel that told Cornelius to send the men to Joppa, but the Spirit says, “I have sent them.” Because Luke is willing to coalesce the actions of the Spirit with those of an angel in the manner of the OT theophanies, it would be unwise to omit communication from the Spirit from this examination of Luke’s dream-visions. As with the category of “appearances,” the Lukan narrative itself seems to resist such exclusion.

Methodology

As suggested above, the primary methodological tool used in this investigation is narrative criticism. As such, this study takes its cue from a number of recent examinations that have employed narrative-critical tools for the interpretation of Luke’s story.⁵⁰ To borrow a phrase from

⁴⁹ Carol Newsom, “Angels [OT],” *ABD* 1:250.

⁵⁰ One of the more prominent figures in this area of Lukan scholarship is Robert Tannehill, with his two volume commentary, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary*

Tannehill, "In this work I am not concerned with developing narrative theory ... but with using selected aspects of narrative criticism to gain new insights into Luke-Acts."⁵¹ The following discussion, therefore, is meant neither as a defense nor a history of narrative criticism. Narrative criticism, like other theories in contemporary literary studies, is a subject around which there is a significant and continual scholarly discussion. My point here is only to outline the reasons why narrative criticism is an effective tool for interpreting the dream-vision scenes in Luke-Acts.

The question that drives this investigation is as follows: What is the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to examine closely both the original narrative account of each dream-vision and the various ways in which characters in the story retell and respond to their visionary experiences. With its component focus on both "story" and "discourse,"⁵² narrative criticism is a useful tool for examining the ways in which dream-visions are narrated in Luke-Acts. That is, it facilitates analysis of *what* happens in each dream-vision and *how* each dream-vision is described within the broader context of Luke's story. Perhaps even more significant for this discussion, narrative criticism provides a rubric for differentiating various points of view within a narrative. Since the question of the relationship between visions and the perception of God's will hinges on how human characters respond to their visionary experiences, distinguishing between the narrator's point of view and the point of view of a given character is paramount.⁵³

Interpretation. See also David Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 2; New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 9–15; and F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 17–22; and Beverly Gaventa, *Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2003). (David Gowler and F. Scott Spencer have combined narrative-critical and socio-critical methods in their studies.)

⁵¹ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:1.

⁵² Seymour Chatman suggests that a "narrative has two parts: a story ... the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse ... the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*" (*Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978], 19).

⁵³ To be clear, I am interested in the way the narrative has been fashioned, as reflected in the final form of the text. This use of narrative criticism, therefore, stands in opposition to earlier methods that attempted to identify a variety of sources behind every theoretical *aporia* in Luke-Acts.

Some further clarification on this component of narrative criticism is, therefore, appropriate.

Wayne Booth suggested that a narrative might have a number of different narrators: "In a sense, every speech, every gesture, narrates; most works contain disguised narrators who are used to tell the audience what it needs to know, while seeming merely to act out their roles."⁵⁴ Getting away from the problem of talking about numerous "narrators" within a single narrative, Gerard Genette developed the idea of "focalization"⁵⁵ and "narrative levels."⁵⁶ Building on the work of Genette, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan further refined the relationship between focalization and narration and expanded the terminology for levels of narration. Rimmon-Kenan's work is very helpful in the way that it clarifies earlier work in narrative criticism. Particularly notable is her conclusion that "narration and focalization, may, but need not, be attributed to the same agent."⁵⁷ Her expansion of narrative levels to include a category of "hypodiegetic" narration ("stories told by fictional characters") could be used to illumine many of the character speeches following the dream-visions in Luke-Acts. Specifically relevant is what she calls the "explicative function" of hypodiegetic narration. She argues that this level of narration is useful for explaining information already in the narrative.⁵⁸ The study of focalization and levels of narration has been developed even further in recent years by Mieke Bal.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 152. Arthur Quinn subsequently used this terminology to examine biblical texts like the Song of Deborah in Judges, coming to the conclusion that Deborah is an unreliable narrator ("Rhetoric and the Integrity of Scripture," *Communio* 13 [1986]: 338).

⁵⁵ Gerard Genette adopts this term "to avoid the too specifically visual connotations of the terms *vision*, *field*, and *point of view*" (*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* [trans. Jane E. Lewin; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980], 189). In his discussion of focalization, Genette distinguishes between "nonfocalized" narratives (i.e., narratives with omniscient narrators), narratives with "internal focalization" (i.e., the narrator is also a character in the story), and narratives with "external focalization" (i.e., narratives in which the narrator is external to the story, but does not provide omniscient insight [189–191]).

⁵⁶ At the risk of oversimplifying, this is the treatment of a story within a story: "We will define this difference in level by saying that *any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed*" (ibid., 228).

⁵⁷ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 72.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 91–92.

⁵⁹ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd ed.; Toronto: Uni-

Although my own understanding of narrative criticism is informed by each of the works noted above, I have chosen not to use the term “focalization” in this study. Instead, I will adopt a term developed by Seymour Chatman in *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*.⁶⁰ Published in 1990, this work served as a revision of Chatman’s seminal *Story and Discourse* in conversation with much of the work done in narratology during the previous decade. In a conscious attempt to move away from the term “focalization,” Chatman coined the term “filter.” This term is meant to distinguish between the perspective of a character and that of the narrator: “[filter]...seems a good term for capturing something of the mediating function of a character’s consciousness—perception, cognition, emotion, reverie—as events are experienced from a space within the story world.”⁶¹ This idea of a character “filter” is particularly well suited to an examination of characters’ responses to their visionary experiences in Luke-Acts, especially since many of these stories are often told first by the narrator and are later retold from a character’s perspective. In such cases, the character is “filtering” information with which the reader is already familiar. Because shifts between the narrator and the perspectives of other characters tend to be fairly clear in Luke-Acts, I regard “filter” as the best terminology for making a distinction between the two.

Since this terminology facilitates a distinction between the point of view of the narrator and the point of view of any given character in the story, it is important to determine how differences between these points of view should be described. When a character’s perceptions are at odds with information the narrator has provided, or will provide, Chatman regards that character’s filter as “fallible.”⁶² If one treats the term “fallible” in its most neutral sense, it can be helpful in reconciling information presented by the narrator of Luke-Acts with information presented by a character in the story. The variety of perspectives in the infancy narratives will provide an adequate example for the moment. If one fails to differentiate between the perspective of the narrator and the perspective of the characters, many of the predictions/interpretations

versity of Toronto Press, 1997). For levels of narration, see pp. 43–75; for focalization, see pp. 142–161.

⁶⁰ Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 149. Here Chatman is making a distinction between the reliability of the narrator, versus the reliability of a character’s perception of events.

in the Magnificat and Benedictus will stand at odds with the rest of Luke's story.⁶³ Both of these character "songs" give the reader a glimpse into the realm of messianic expectations. Both Mary and Zechariah interpret their visionary experience by predicting events that do not come to pass, *per se*, in the story. Differentiating their perspectives from that of the narrator allows the reader to appreciate how the characters in the story perceive God's will, even when their perceptions do not line up perfectly with the story the narrator tells.

I have suggested a certain incompatibility or incongruity between some of the more complex aspects of narrative criticism and the narrative found in Luke-Acts, and have chosen what I regard as useful terminology for discussing the dream-visions in the Lukan narrative. It remains, however, to determine whether one can speak legitimately of characters offering varying, individual perspectives in ancient literature, since this may seem to be a feature of more recent literature. As it happens, there is evidence for this in Greek literature dating as far back as Homer. Irene de Jong has observed that different characters in epic poetry can describe the same event, each in a way that highlights the character's individual perspective. Three characters in the *Iliad*, for example, relate the story of Tydeus' embassy to Thebes: Agamemnon (*Il.* 4.372–398), Athena (*Il.* 5.802–808), and Diomedes (*Il.* 10.285–290). Agamemnon focuses on his role in the event in order to encourage support. Athena's version emphasizes that Tydeus' victory and deliverance were the result of her assistance. In a suppliant prayer to Athena, Diomedes mentions the incident in an attempt to garner the goddess' support.⁶⁴ This evidence suggests that one can discuss fruitfully the idea of character perspectives in ancient literature.

Finally, since Luke's use of dream-visions informs one's understanding of Luke's theology and anthropology, it is necessary to discuss how the method of narrative criticism might relate to these larger topics. Attempts to assess Lukan theology and anthropology through the first half of the twentieth century tended to ignore the Lukan narrative as a whole. As Beverly Gaventa has observed, studies of Luke's theology in the text of Acts often resorted, therefore, to methods like redaction criticism or an analysis of speeches, "key" texts, or prominent themes. The problem with using redaction criticism is that there is no evidence by

⁶³ A detailed discussion of these texts is found in chapter 4 below.

⁶⁴ Irene J.F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad* (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, 1989), 155–156.

which to evaluate whether Luke used written sources for Acts, or, if he did, what those sources may have contained. Focusing on speeches, key texts, or prominent themes requires one to privilege certain parts of the narrative to the exclusion of others.⁶⁵ Christoph Stenschke has noted a similar trend in earlier studies of Luke's anthropology. Such studies often focused on individual passages like the Areopagus speech, leaving aside the larger context of Luke's story.⁶⁶ Both of these scholars have argued that one must examine the whole of Luke's narrative in order to understand Lukan theology and anthropology.⁶⁷ The narrative-critical method employed in this study adheres to this criterion, treating Luke's dream-visions within the full narrative context of Luke-Acts.

Examinations of biblical material often employ more than one method, and this study will be no exception. Although narrative criticism will provide the primary lens through which the visionary material in Luke-Acts is read, it is also important to understand the way that dream-visions were perceived more broadly in the ancient world. The aforementioned assumptions about the general acceptance of dream-visions as a reliable form of divine communication in antiquity make such historical questions all the more relevant. The background discussion in chapter 1, therefore, will also employ historical criticism as a means of determining exceptions to the idea that ancient people universally accepted dream-visions as a reliable form of divine communication.

Content and Focus

The previous discussion has highlighted an erroneous assumption about the universal acceptance of dream-visions as a reliable form of divine communication. It has also posed a larger question: What is the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts? Chapter 1 of this study will treat the assumption of universal acceptance. The relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts will then be addressed in two stages.

⁶⁵ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 148–150.

⁶⁶ Cristoph Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (WUNT 108; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1999), 50.

⁶⁷ See Gaventa ("Toward a Theology of Acts," 150–157) and Stenschke (*Portrait*, 51–52).

Paul's dream-vision at Troas (Acts 16:6–10) is one of the most perplexing visionary encounters in Luke's narrative, and requires special attention. In this passage, the narrator describes a peculiar dream-vision in which no divine agent is mentioned. Instead, Paul and his companions are left to interpret Paul's dream, drawing a theological conclusion. Their conclusion that they had been called to proclaim the gospel in Macedonia—a conclusion accepted by most commentators—is particularly interesting when read in the larger context of Acts 13–17. Chapter 2, therefore, will survey the history of scholarship on this passage, and will also discuss the few studies that have treated the larger topic of dream-visions in Luke-Acts. Chapter 3 provides a narrative-critical examination of the Troas episode, focusing especially on the human decisions and interpretation that determine the course of this portion of Luke's story. These first three chapters establish the context for a broader examination of all the dream-visions in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles (chapters 4 and 5, respectively).

This study will suggest that Luke's dream-visions range along a broad spectrum of character experiences. In some passages, characters become deeply engaged in the process of interpreting their visionary encounters. Such interpretation is manifest especially in the dream-visions of the infancy narrative (Luke 1:11–22, 26–38, 46–55, and 67–79), Saul's conversion (Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–21; 26:12–18), the Cornelius–Peter episode (Acts 10:1 – 11:18), and Paul's vision at Troas (Acts 16:6–10). At the other end of the spectrum are those passages in which characters respond almost automatically to the message of their dream-vision, making no attempt to interpret the experience. The shepherds respond to their vision of angels in this way (Luke 2:8–20), as does Philip (Acts 8:26–40).

More important are the implications of these dream-visions for the understanding of Lukan theology. Although it has long been noted that Luke's dream-visions reveal an interest in depicting God's active involvement in the events of human history, the present study suggests that it is equally important to notice the role of human interpretation in these encounters. Just as Luke's dream-visions depict God as an active participant in human affairs, they also depict God's people attempting to perceive God's will through these same visionary encounters.

CHAPTER ONE

DREAM-VISIONS IN ANTIQUITY

Before embarking on a study of the history of interpretation of Acts 16:6–10 and of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, it is important to examine the variety of opinions toward dream-visions in the ancient world. More specifically, since the present study focuses on the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts, the following background discussion will emphasize an issue of some debate in scholarly treatments of dream-visions: How, and to what extent, did Jews and non-Jews regard dream-visions as a reliable medium of revelation from early antiquity through late antiquity? As the evidence will make clear, this question must be qualified even further. The present study is concerned not only with beliefs about the *source* of dream-visions, but also with opinions as to their *veracity*. Especially in the non-Jewish Graeco-Roman evidence, one finds that people often viewed dream-visions as “divine” or otherworldly in origin, even if they did not regard the message of these dream-visions as trustworthy. A “reliable medium of revelation,” therefore, must be more narrowly defined as a trustworthy message from a divine or otherworldly source.

There have been a number of studies examining various facets of the dream-vision in the antiquity, many of which have treated this issue of belief in the reliability of dream-vision messages. Some scholars have attempted to draw decisive conclusions on this issue, arguing that dream-visions were almost always trusted as a medium of revelation. They have done so, however, only by ignoring contrary evidence. These conclusions create a particular problem for the interpreter of Luke-Acts, especially because Luke-Acts contains no objective reflection on the nature of dream-visions. If one accepts general conclusions about the universal belief in dream-visions uncritically, one is unable to appreciate the complexity of the dream-visions both in Luke-Acts and in the ancient world. The evidence presented in this chapter will suggest that any attempt to understand dream-visions in the Graeco-Roman world must be based on a sensitive treatment of a broad spectrum of material.

For the purpose of this discussion, non-Jewish Graeco-Roman evidence will be treated separately from Jewish evidence of the same general period (including the OT, OTA, DSS, and *OTP*). This distinction is not meant to be arbitrary, nor does it suggest that Jewish

texts can be separated from their cultural context. As Martin Hengel has rightly concluded, interpretations of Jewish texts (perhaps especially those written in Greek) from the Hellenistic period cannot, and should not, ignore their Hellenistic milieu.¹ Instead, it is a distinction based on subtle, but significant, differences in the way dream-visions are treated in these respective corpora of literature. Positive evaluations of dream-visions are similar in both groups of evidence. They are distinguished primarily by the singular Jewish view that dreams and visions come from one God. More significant differences arise in the negative evaluations. In non-Jewish sources, dream-visions may be suspect on a number of levels: they may be deceptive by their very nature, they may be sent by a deity whose intention is to deceive the recipient, or they may be viewed as a psychosomatic experience having no broader significance. Jewish texts that describe dream-visions negatively tend to do so in the context of warnings about false prophecy.

In the discussion that follows, evidence from a number of different sources and time periods will be considered. It is necessary, therefore, to make another important methodological caveat: the purpose of this examination is to look broadly at the literary and historical evidence of how the ancients viewed dream-visions. Although a study of the attitude(s) towards dream-visions in a particular time and place would be interesting, it would not serve the purpose of the current investigation.² With a few exceptions,³ one cannot know exactly which texts influenced the writer of Luke-Acts, nor can one know the influence of shifting attitudes towards the revelatory nature of dream-visions at various points in antiquity. Rather, the purpose of this discussion is to observe the variety of attitudes toward dream-visions found in both Jewish and non-Jewish evidence of the Graeco-Roman world.

¹ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1974), 1.1–3 and passim.

² In his study of religion in Hellenistic Athens, Jon D. Mikalson observes what he regards as a common methodological error in some contemporary studies: “the failure to distinguish religious phenomena and evidence by date and place” (*Religion in Hellenistic Athens* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 2). In general, I agree with this methodological criterion. For the present study, I would argue that a wider scope of investigation is in order. In addition to the issue of “influence” discussed below, one may add that the time of Luke’s writing can only be generalized, and the place of writing is completely unknown.

³ In some of the Lukan dream-vision scenes discussed in the chapters below, there are direct verbal allusions to passages in the LXX. In such cases, one can and should assume influence.

Dream-visions in non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman Culture

*Positive Evaluations of Dreams*⁴

In the previously mentioned *ANRW* article, Hanson suggests that both the form of dream-vision reports and belief in the revelatory power of the dream are consistent in Graeco-Roman literature:

The form of the dream-vision report is fairly consistent, but the dream experience is universal and is matched by an almost universal belief in the dream as divine or supernatural. That is, dreams and visions are revelatory, and while the ancients saw their value as primarily for the future, they served other purposes as well. The extant data show that dreams and visions were nearly always considered meaningful or significant.⁵

From this forceful claim, one can imagine that evidence of belief in the revelatory power of dream-visions abounds in Graeco-Roman culture.⁶ Indeed, one hardly gets past the first book of Homer's *Iliad* without an example. In *Il.* 2.6, Zeus sends a "destructive dream" (οὔλος ὄνειρος) to Agamemnon. Despite the deceptive nature of this dream, Agamemnon accepts it completely:

ὦς ἄρα φωνήσας ἀπεβήσετο, τὸν δ' ἔλιπ' αὐτοῦ
τὰ φρονέοντ' ἀνά θυμὸν ἃ ῥ' οὐ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλον
φῆ γὰρ ὃ γ' αἰρήσειν Πριάμου πόλιν ἦματι κείνῳ,
νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὰ ἤδη ἃ ῥα Ζεὺς μῆδετο ἔργα·

Having said these things, the dream departed and left him there
thinking over things in his heart that were not about to come to pass;

⁴ On the difficulty of distinguishing between "dreams" and "visions" in Graeco-Roman literature, see the discussion of Hanson's work in the introduction (pp. 8–9).

⁵ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1396. At the end of this claim regarding significance, Hanson adds a note saying, "This assertion stands (despite E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* [Berkeley, 1951], p. 106f. and G. Björck, *ONAP ΙΔΕΙΝ: De la perception de reve chez les anciens*, *Erano* 44 [1946], p. 307, and the few texts such as Herodotus 7.16), if only because dreams deemed non-significant were not worthy of recording" (1396 n. 4). Similar conclusions are drawn by Morton Kelsey (*Dreams: The Dark Speech of the Spirit. A Christian Interpretation* [New York: Doubleday, 1968], 17–101). Like Hanson, Kelsey also draws a positive generic conclusion about the widespread acceptance of dream-visions in antiquity, even though he too mentions many of the problematic passages discussed below.

⁶ By "culture," I mean only that I will be examining both literary and non-literary evidence (i.e., inscriptions and legal material).

For he was thinking that he would capture the city of Priam that very day,
unaware in his naivete of the plans which Zeus was then devising.⁷

As evidence for the acceptance of the revelatory nature of dreams in antiquity, it is important to look at this text on at least two different levels. It supports Hanson's argument regarding the "divine" origin of dreams. It also supports the idea that dreams were accepted as revelatory: Agamemnon's acceptance of this dream as revelatory, and his reactions to it, set the course of the plot for the rest of the story. The interesting twist, of course, is that the dream does not reveal anything like a straightforward, accurate picture of the events to come.

It is precisely this point that ought to raise suspicions about general conclusions like those of Hanson. Hanson equates the "universal belief in the dream as divine or supernatural" with a belief in their revelatory power: "That is, dreams and visions are revelatory." Although it is true that dreams were often viewed as divine or supernatural in origin (especially in this early period), it is much less clear that the ancients automatically accepted dream messages as a reliable form of revelation. Agamemnon may accept the message of his ὄνειδος at face value. The narrator of the story, however, tells the reader from the very beginning that this dream is οὐλος (destructive). The point is re-emphasized at the end of the dream in the passage quoted above: Agamemnon is left "thinking over things in his heart that were not about to come to pass." Therefore, this story should heighten one's sensitivity to the various layers of evidence regarding beliefs in dream-visions found in ancient literature. This is especially true when the narrator's perspective differs so dramatically from the character's.⁸

Another example of the use of dreams in antiquity comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. In book 4, Penelope is anxious about the safety of her son, Telemachos. While Penelope sleeps, Athena fashions a dream image (in the form of her sister, Iphthime) meant to reassure her of her son's safety.⁹ The dream image tells Penelope that her son travels under

⁷ Homer, *Il.* 2.35–38.

⁸ Such a distinction between the narrator's perspective and the filtered perspective of a character in the story will be important for understanding a number of the dream-vision passages in Luke-Acts (especially the conversion of Saul [Acts 9, 22, and 26] and the Cornelius-Peter episode [Acts 10–11]).

⁹ Homer, *Od.* 4.795–841.

the safe watch of Athena herself.¹⁰ In the wake of the dream, Penelope is immediately soothed:

᾽Ως εἰπὼν σταθμοῖο παρὰ κληῖδα λιάσθη
ἐς πνοιᾶς ἀνέμων· ἡ δ' ἔξ ὕπνου ἀνόρουσε
κοῦρη Ἰκαρίοιο· φίλον δέ οἱ ἦτορ ἰάνθη,
ὥς οἱ ἔναργές ὄνειρον ἐπέσσυτο νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ.¹¹

Having spoken thus, she¹² withdrew past the bolt of the door post,
into the breath of the winds. From sleep awoke
the daughter of Ikarios, warmed in her own heart
that a clear dream came to her in the wee hours of the night.

Again, this dream comes from a divine source,¹³ and it is revelatory. Unlike the passage in *Il.* 2, there is no disparity between the narrator's presentation of this dream-vision and the character's reception of it.

Dream-visions continue to play a significant role in later Graeco-Roman literature. William Messer has examined the literary function of dreams in both Homer and Greek tragedy.¹⁴ Dreams—deceptive or trustworthy—often provide the impetus for plot shifts in the Homeric texts.¹⁵ Messer suggests that this function is also prominent in the plays of Aeschylus.¹⁶ Especially relevant for this discussion is Messer's observation that these dreams require special care in dramatic texts. Unlike the dreams in Homer, in which the narrator can give some confirmation of a dream's veracity, dreams in drama must be corroborated by some other omen or oracle uttered by a character on stage.¹⁷ This plot-motivating function of dreams in Homer and Aeschylus is absent in the work of Sophocles. But in Sophocles' *Electra*, there is another literary function: Chrysothemis' dream leads to the debate between Electra and Clytemnestra, in which the audience is given sympathetic insights

¹⁰ Homer, *Od.* 4.824–829.

¹¹ Homer, *Od.* 4.838–841.

¹² Lit. “it”; the neuter nominative singular participle εἰπὼν (“having spoken”) is modifying the neuter εἶδωλον ([dream] “image”) in 4.835.

¹³ See esp. Homer, *Od.* 4.831–834.

¹⁴ William Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (New York: Columbia University, 1918). Messer distinguishes between “dreams” and what he calls “waking visions,” and includes only the former in this examination.

¹⁵ See, for example, the passage in Homer, *Il.* 2 discussed above; Messer, *Dream*, 8–9.

¹⁶ This is especially true in *Persians*, *Libation-Bearers*, and *Prometheus Bound* (Messer, *Dream*, 60–74). Messer wrote before the common contemporary assumption that *Prometheus Bound* is not authentically Aeschylean (see Mark Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977]).

¹⁷ Messer, *Dream*, 56–57.

into the queen's actions and behavior.¹⁸ This use of dreams to help illuminate characterization is unique to Sophocles among the three primary tragedians.¹⁹ Tragedy also developed the use of dreams in service of redirecting the plot, adding the twist of misinterpretation: characters misinterpret their dreams in a way that changes the course of the story. Messer suggests that this element is prominent in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Tauris*.²⁰

This use of character misinterpretation of dream-visions comes to fruition in the later material of the so-called Greek novels. In her treatment of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, Shadi Bartsch has demonstrated convincingly that character misinterpretation of dreams plays a complex descriptive role.²¹ Dreams in a narrative demand interpretation both by characters and by the readers of the story. When characters misinterpret their dreams, Bartsch argues that the readers are lulled into believing these misinterpretations—only to be surprised by the true meaning discovered later in the narrative.²²

Thus far, this discussion has focused on literary evidence. To get the fullest picture of the revelatory understanding of dream-visions in the Graeco-Roman world, one must also examine other forms of historical evidence as well. Fortunately, this evidence abounds in the form of temple inscriptions, legal records, and the extant dream interpretation manuals.

Perhaps the best epigraphic evidence is found in inscriptions related to dream incubation: a common practice in which someone went to sleep in a temple or sacred place in the hopes of receiving a message from the god of that sanctuary.²³ This practice was especially com-

¹⁸ Messer, *Dream*, 79–81; see Sophocles, *El.* 400–425.

¹⁹ Messer, *Dream*, 79–81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 91–96 (esp. n. 362); see Euripides, *Iph. taur.* 44–59. Messer suggests that Euripides may find his model for this device (misinterpretation as a means of directing the plot) in “the realm of oracular responses, traditionally ambiguous, notoriously susceptible of conflicting interpretations” (*Dream*, 92 n. 362).

²¹ Shadi Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), esp. chapter 3, “Dreams, Oracles, and Oracular Dreams: Misinterpretation and Motivation” (80–108).

²² *Ibid.*, 80–81. Especially in the case of Heliodorus, Bartsch suggests that there is a development in the way that these dreams and interpretations are presented, such that readers learn through the course of the novel how they are supposed to understand the way that dreams are presented and either correctly interpreted—or misinterpreted—by the characters (106–107).

²³ Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1397. This practice was most common among people seeking medical cures, but it also occurred in other contexts as well (see below).

mon within the Asclepius cult, for which there is extensive evidence.²⁴ Among the most striking bits of evidence are the inscriptions of the Epidaurian Temple Record.²⁵ These inscriptions, some dating from the latter half of the fourth century BCE, indicate that people came to this temple of Asclepius seeking healing for all manner of ills.²⁶ People sought cures for serious challenges such as blindness and paralysis,²⁷ and also for more cosmetic concerns like baldness.²⁸ There were certainly detractors of such practices in antiquity.²⁹ It would be a grave mistake, however, to underestimate the esteem with which dream incubation was viewed—an esteem illustrated poignantly in an example of dream-visions being used as evidence in legal proceedings.

In the late fourth century BCE, a legal charge of impeachment was brought by a certain Polyeuctus³⁰ against a man names Euxenippus.³¹ The facts of the case can be summarized as follows: land on a particular mountain was included in the allotment given to two tribes (Acamantis

²⁴ See, for example, the data compiled by Emma Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein (*Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* [2 vols.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945], 1.338–442). The most extensive personal evidence of devotion to Asclepius, and the dream interpretation associated with this cult, is found in the *Sacred Tales* of Aelius Aristides.

²⁵ See, for example, Edelstein and Edelstein (*Asclepius*, 1.T 422–424). For discussions of the Epidaurian record and some of the critical scholarship on it, see Dodds (*The Greeks and the Irrational*, 111–115).

²⁶ It should be noted that some of the Epidaurian inscriptions do not mention any sort of dream message being received during the incubation. In some cases, the suppliant leaves the temple uncured, only to be cured miraculously later on by Asclepius or one of the temple serpents or dogs (*Inscriptiones Graecae*, IV, 1, nos. 121–122.xvi, xxv [cited in Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 221–237]).

²⁷ Examples from the Record are found in *IG*, IV, 1, nos. 121–122.ii, iii, iv, ix, xv (cited in Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 221–237).

²⁸ *IG*, IV, 1, nos. 121–122.xix (cited in Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 221–237).

²⁹ Aristophanes lampoons dream incubation and resultant cures in the cult of Asclepius (*The Rich Man*, 620–649). Dodds notes the suspicions of Diogenes regarding votives to another deity: “there would have been far more [votive inscriptions] if those who were *not* rescued had made dedications” [Diogenes Laertius 6.59] (cited in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 113).

The most interesting evidence of such denigration, however, comes from the Record itself. Some of the inscriptions mention that an individual entered the temple, read the descriptions of miraculous healings recorded in the inscriptions, and expressed disbelief (*ἀπιστέω*) in such healings, only to be subsequently healed by the god (*IG*, IV, 1, nos. 121–122.iii, xxxvi [cited in Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 221–237]).

³⁰ It is clear from the defense that Lycurgus also participated in the prosecution. See also Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, 25.

³¹ Evidence for this case comes from the preserved defense speech of Hyperides, *In Defense of Euxenippus*.

and Hippothoontis); later, it was alleged that this land actually belonged to the temple grounds of the god Amphiaraus; the decision of the court was that Euxenippus should go and sleep in the temple of Amphiaraus (i.e., incubate a dream), and report back what the god revealed to him; Euxenippus reported that he was told in his dream that the land was not the property of the god. The impeachment charge brought against Euxenippus by Polyeuctus asserted that Euxenippus had *falsified this dream report*. Polyeuctus had even gone so far as to assert that Euxenippus' action was deserving of the death penalty.³² However outlandish this case may sound to the modern ear, it demonstrates that dream incubation was a practice viewed with widespread respect in the religious understanding of late fourth century Athenians.³³

The most dramatic positive³⁴ evidence for the revelatory aspects of dream-visions in antiquity is found in the so-called dream interpretation manuals. The best and most extensive example is the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus. Living in the second century C.E., Artemidorus wrote his five-volume work as a response both to those who would disparage the revelatory nature of dreams and to those who search in vain for a reliable form of prophecy.³⁵ Detailing his own methods of research, Artemidorus mentions that his five-volume work was compiled only after he had studied all of the known manuals of dream interpretation, and after he had spent years consulting with a variety of people. This latter aspect of his research involved inquiring about what people dreamed, and then determining what events followed the dream.³⁶ He

³² Hyperides, *In Defense of Euxenippus* 4.14.

³³ Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess how dream-visions were regarded more broadly as evidence in Greek legal rhetoric. Aeschines, for example, makes three disparaging references to dreams adduced as evidence by Demosthenes (*Fals. leg.* 10; *Ctes.* 77. 219). As Adams observed, however, Demosthenes removed the discussions of dreams to which Aeschines referred in the revision of his own work (*The Speeches of Aeschines* [trans. Charles Darwin Adams; LCL; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1919], 169 n. 1).

³⁴ I use the term "positive" to distinguish this from "negative" evidence like the philosophical writings of Aristotle and Cicero (discussed below under the subheading Disputed Dreams in Graeco-Roman Literature). Even the negative remarks of the philosophers point to some degree of belief in the surrounding culture; the philosophers have to be arguing against someone.

³⁵ Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams—Oneirocritica* (trans. Robert J. White; Torrance, Calif.: Original Books, 1990), prologue to book 1. Hereafter, this text will be abbreviated *Onir.*; all translations cited are those of White.

³⁶ As C.A. Behr observes: "The science of dream interpretation, if it was not to be fraudulent, was of necessity deductive. The validity or worthlessness of a dream could only be determined after the event" (*Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* [Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1968], 172).

spoke with the “diviners of the marketplace,” and with people at religious gatherings throughout Greece, Asia Minor, Italy, and “the largest and most populous of the islands.”³⁷

Artemidorus begins by making an important distinction between two general categories of dream experience: the *ὀνείδος* and the *ἐνύπνιον*.³⁸ The *ἐνύπνιον* can be understood as a dream that reflects the circumstances of the body or mind: “it is natural for a lover to seem to be with his beloved in a dream and for a frightened man to see what he fears.”³⁹ What is important about this category is that *ἐνύπνια* have no significance for understanding the future. It is the *ὀνείδος*, on the other hand, that “[calls] to the dreamer’s attention a prediction of future events.”⁴⁰ A second division is that between “theorematic” dreams (those that directly reveal what the future holds), and “allegorical” dreams (those whose meaning is symbolic).⁴¹ Artemidorus’ work is concerned with the latter group, since it is these experiences that require interpretation. The result of Artemidorus’ extensive travel and research is an encyclopedic discussion of the symbolic meaning of things seen in dreams.⁴²

Disputed Dreams in Graeco-Roman Literature

Before a dream-vision can be considered significant, before it can affect the course of action a character follows, it must be regarded as a reliable medium of revelation. The previous section provides an extensive sampling of evidence that supports Hanson’s claim that dream-visions

³⁷ Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1 (prologue).

³⁸ Behr suggests that this two-fold classification may be traced back to Plato, whose own view of dreams is somewhat mixed (*Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, 173). It is important to note, however, that Plato did not appear interested in making such a classification, *per se*. In order to find evidence of these two categories in Plato’s thought, one must compare Plato’s discussion of “daemons” in *Epinomis* 985 (a work now regarded as spurious) with his discussion of dreams as a manifestation of character in the *Republic* 571–572.

³⁹ Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.1; this is the way that philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero understood all dreams (see below).

⁴⁰ Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.1.

⁴¹ Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.2.

⁴² A couple of examples will suffice: “If a man dreams that he has the head of a lion, wolf, leopard, or elephant, instead of his own, it is auspicious. For a dreamer who attempts things beyond his powers will be successful in them and, as a result of his superiority, will gain many advantages” (Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.37); “Bees mean good luck for farmers and beekeepers. But for other men, they signify confusion because of their hum, wounds because of their sting, and sickness because of their honey and wax” (*Onir.* 2.22).

were regarded as revelation in the Graeco-Roman world. Now it is necessary to examine the counterevidence. Despite his additional claim that “exceptions to the attitude of faith in the dream ... are few,”⁴³ Hanson himself provides a rather alarming number of exceptions.⁴⁴ One could argue, however, that Hanson’s claim does not give adequate attention to contrary evidence—evidence suggesting that dream-visions were not always regarded as revelation from another realm.⁴⁵ Beginning with Homer, one observes literary characters doubting the veracity of dream-visions. Indeed, similar suspicions arise in a variety of material from Homer to the Greek novel. Certainly, one does not find this explicit suspicion of dream-visions as frequently as one finds the acceptance of their revelatory power. The persistent presence of these suspicions, however, demands attention.

The earliest dispute over the revelatory nature of dream-visions in Graeco-Roman literature is found in Homer, *Od.* 19. To her own husband, Odysseus, still disguised as an old man, Penelope relates a dream in which an eagle comes and kills the twenty geese that live and eat in the palace. The dream ends with its own interpretation that the geese are the suitors and the eagle is Odysseus himself. When Penelope asks her “elderly guest” to interpret this dream, he tells her that it purports exactly what the eagle told her: Odysseus will return and wreak havoc and destruction upon the suitors. Penelope’s response is remarkably cautious:

Ξεῖν', ἧ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι
γίγνοντ', οὐδὲ τι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισι.
δοιαὶ γάρ τε πύλαι ἀμενημῶν εἰσὶν ὀνείρων
αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχεται, αἱ δ' ἐλέφαντι
τῶν οἱ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
οἱ δ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες·
οἱ δὲ διὰ ξεστῶν κεράων ἔλθωσι θύραζε,

⁴³ Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1398.

⁴⁴ In addition to observations about the Homeric example from *Od.* 19 (see below) and later “imitations” of this passage, Hanson also notes: that dream interpreters usually had a special category reserved for “non-significant” dreams, and that various philosophers criticize belief in dreams (e.g., Plato [although his criticism tends to be inconsistent], Aristotle, and Cicero). See Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1398–1400.

⁴⁵ This is odd, especially since Hanson notes some of the passages that will be examined in this section (e.g., Homer, *Od.* 19 and Virgil, *Aen.* 6). Apparently, Hanson did not consider the extant evidence of suspicion significant enough to counter his claim. Something similar is seen in the later work of Kelsey (see chapter 2 below). He discusses texts like *Od.* 19, but does not acknowledge that they call into question general claims of faith in dream-visions.

οἱ ῥ' ἔτυμα κραινέουσι, βροτῶν ὅτε κέν τις ἴδῃται.
 ἀλλ' ἔμοι οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν ὄτομαι αἰνὸν ὄνειρον
 ἐλθέμεν· ἦ κ' ἄσπαστόν ἐμοὶ καὶ παιδὶ γένοιτο.⁴⁶

Oh Stranger, dreams are inscrutable and confusing,
 nor do all of them result in anything for people.
 For there are two gates of phantom dreams:
 One has been made of horn, the other of ivory.
 The dreams which come through that of sawn ivory
 are deceptive, since they bring things that will not be fulfilled.
 The ones that come forth through that of polished horn, however,
 bring about actual results when some mortal sees them.
 But I do not think the shocking dream came to me thence;
 it would be a welcome sign for me and for my child if it did.

It is interesting to note that Penelope does not merely doubt the veracity of her own dream. Rather, she is commenting on the general reliability of dream messages. This is all the more striking when one considers that Penelope is not questioning the otherworldly origin of dreams. According to her suggestion, all dreams originate in the nether realm.⁴⁷ Some simply offer messages that are never destined to come to pass. It is difficult to determine the full influence of this passage on later literature. It was certainly well known in antiquity—a fact attested by Virgil's allusion to this passage several hundred years later:

Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
 cornea, qua ueris facilis datur exitus umbris,
 altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
 sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes.
 his ibi tum natum Anchises unaque Sibyllam
 prosequitur dictis portaque emittit eburna,
 ille viam secat ad navis sociosque revisit.⁴⁸

There are two gates of Sleep: one of which is said
 to be made of horn, through which easy passage is given to true semblances;
 the other is beautiful, made of shining ivory;
 but [it is from here that] the shades send false dreams to the world
 above.

When all had been said, Anchises then accompanied his son

⁴⁶ Homer, *Od.* 19.560–569.

⁴⁷ For Homer, dreams dwell in the δῆμος ὄνειρων (“village of dreams”; see *Od.* 24.11–14). In these epics, there are personified dreams (presumably from this region [one could perhaps understand the “destructive dream” of *Il.* 2.6 as one of these figures]), and dream images fashioned by one of the gods (e.g., *Od.* 4.787–841).

⁴⁸ Virgil, *Aen.* 6.893–899.

and one Sibyl, and sent them out through the ivory gate.
 Passing that way, the man returned to his ships and associates.

In addition to the many other texts that may contain allusions to *Od.* 19,⁴⁹ there are a number of other texts ranging across several centuries and genres that call dream-vision messages into question.⁵⁰ Herodotus offers an interesting example. In *Hist.* 7.10–17, Artabanus attempts to dissuade Xerxes from marshalling an expedition against the Greeks. Xerxes has had a dream in which he has been instructed not to disband his expedition against Greece. He is so disturbed by this dream that he asks Artabanus to wear his clothes, sit on his throne, and then sleep on his bed; Xerxes' assumption is that the dream will appear also to Artabanus, if indeed it is from the gods. Artabanus' first response is to question the revelatory nature of this dream at the very source: πεπλανῆσθαι αὐται μάλιστα ἐώθασι αἱ ὄψιες τῶν ὀνειράτων, τά τις ἡμέρης φροντίζει ("These visions of dreams most accustomed to swirl around [us], these are things one thinks about during the day").⁵¹ Artabanus is shortly contradicted by a visitation of Xerxes' dream image,⁵² but this suggestion that dreams are only remnants of one's conscious thoughts is very similar to the philosophical perspective later expressed by Aristotle.

Aristotle discusses dream-visions in two short philosophical treatises: *On Dreams* and *On Prophecy in Sleep*. In *On Dreams*, Aristotle discusses the psychobiological processes at work in dreams, and argues that dreams are not at all related to human perception (i.e., perception of entities from another realm), but to imagination (τὸ φανταστικόν).⁵³ In *On Prophecy in Sleep*, he argues more specifically against the revelatory power of dreams. Here, Aristotle turns from scientific discussion to rational argumentation. Admitting that some might be tempted

⁴⁹ Hanson suggests that the following contain such allusions or imitations: Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2.32–33; Plato, *Charm.* 173a; Sophocles, *El.* 645; Horace, *Carm.* 3.27.41.

⁵⁰ In the discussion that follows, I will refer only to clear disputations of dream-visions. Related to this question, however, is the general trustworthiness of communications from the gods. Note, for example, the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which the Muses refer to themselves as capable of making falsehood seem true: ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὅμοια ("we know how to say many false things just like they were true" [*Theog.* 27]).

⁵¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.16.

⁵² Like Homer, *Il.* 2, this passage contains various layers. In this case, it is the character who dismisses the dream-vision, and the narrator who supports it.

⁵³ Aristotle, *On Dreams* 459a.

to believe that prophecy (ἡ μαντική) can occur through dreams simply because “all or many” people believe this is so, Aristotle counters that there is no “rational cause” for such belief.⁵⁴ He maintains that if god did send messages in dreams, they would be sent to the “best and wisest” people (οἱ βελτίστοι καὶ φρονιμώτατοι).⁵⁵ Instead, dreams come to all manner of people. Dreams can indeed “come true,” but only to the extent that dreams can stimulate the mind to follow a particular course of action after one wakes.⁵⁶

Two centuries later, Cicero picked up Aristotle’s argument and offered an even more scathing declamation against the revelatory power of dreams in *De Divinatione*.⁵⁷ Throughout this work, Cicero characterizes divination as superstition.⁵⁸ Cicero’s own argument against divination follows and expands many of the points already made by Aristotle.⁵⁹ The entire argument is quite lengthy; of importance here is the discussion of dreams in Book 2.

The position Cicero argues against primarily in this text is the positive view of dreams held by the Stoics. For the Stoics, the human soul is an emanation of the divine soul. Between the two exists a certain συμπαθεία (“affinity”) that allows communication from one to the other: this communication can happen in the form of dreams.⁶⁰ What about dreams that never seem to amount to anything? In the Stoic view, some dreams are revelatory and others are not.⁶¹ This is the weak link that Cicero attacks. It makes no sense, he argues, to suggest that some dreams come from god, but that others arise from natural causes within

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *On Prophecy in Sleep* 462b. It is interesting to note that this bit of negative evidence (i.e., an explicit argument against the revelatory power of dreams) provides evidence that many did believe that dreams were revelatory.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *On Prophecy in Sleep* 462b.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *On Prophecy in Sleep* 463a.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that dreams are only one type of divination discussed in this treatise.

⁵⁸ As William Armistead Falconer has observed, this characterization is all the more interesting since Cicero himself served as an augur. The concession was primarily political: “augury and auspices ... were engrafted on the Roman constitution and [Cicero] advocated their observance because of his belief in obedience to law and because, as a member of the aristocratic party, he thought augury and auspices the best means of controlling the excesses of democracy” (Cicero, *De Senectute*, *De Amicitia*, *De Divinatione* [trans. William Armistead Falconer; LCL; New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1923], 216).

⁵⁹ Cicero even refers explicitly to Aristotle’s work when he suggests that dreams result from the soul’s inability to remain inactive during sleep (*Div.* 2.62.128).

⁶⁰ Cicero, *Div.* 2.58.119; cf. 2.60.124.

⁶¹ Cicero, *Div.* 2.62.127.

the body. Either all dreams come from god, and god is thus responsible for both deceptive and true dreams, or all dreams arise from natural causes.⁶² Since the former seems to Cicero completely contradictory, he concludes that dreams arise solely from natural causes. Like Aristotle, Cicero concedes that dreams can “come true,” but he suggests that this is mere coincidence.⁶³ More forcefully than Aristotle, Cicero concludes: “Therefore, let this divination by dreams be rejected along with the rest.”⁶⁴

The philosophical discussions of Aristotle and Cicero offer a complex picture of the understanding of dream-visions in the Graeco-Roman world. They argue that dreams cannot be viewed as revelation from divine or otherworldly sources; at the same time, both authors acknowledge a widespread belief in the revelatory power of dream-visions in their contemporary cultures. As evidence for varying beliefs in dream-visions, these texts reflect a complexity similar to the passage from Homer, *Il.* 2 discussed above. This is not to suggest that beliefs in dream-visions were consistent during the several centuries from Homer to Cicero. Clearly, it would be a mistake to equate belief in the δῆμος ὀνειρώων (“village of dreams”) with the Stoic συμπαθεία (“affinity”). Likewise, it would be a mistake to equate the suspicion of dream-visions expressed in Homer, *Od.* 19 with that found in Aristotle’s *On Prophecy in Sleep*; the suspicion expressed toward dream-visions in each respective text is based on radically different criteria. What these texts share in common, along with Herodotus’ story in *Hist.* 7 and Cicero’s *Div.*, is an explicit disputation of the reliability of messages received in dream-visions.

Since the previous discussion of positive references to dream-visions included Hyperides’ defense of Euxenippus (the fourth century Athenian accused of falsifying a dream report), it is also necessary to mention that patience with references to dream-visions in judicial rhetoric wore thin in the Roman period. Both Seneca and Quintilian repudiate the use of dream-visions as a *color* (“a palliative”; “a pretext, or excuse”)⁶⁵ in legal cases. Seneca says of Junius Otho: “Wherever he lacked a pretext, he described a dream.”⁶⁶ Quintilian argues more

⁶² Cicero, *Div.* 2.62.127.

⁶³ Cicero, *Div.* 2.68.141.

⁶⁴ Cicero, *Div.* 2.72.148: Explodatur igitur haec quoque somniorum divinatio pariter cum ceteris.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this term in rhetorical texts, see OLD, s.v. “color.”

⁶⁶ Seneca, *Controversiae* 7.7.15 (ubicumque illum defecerat color, somnium narrabat).

forcefully: "Pretexts of dreams and superstitions are so easy [to fabricate] that they diminish the authority [of an argument]." ⁶⁷

There are other passages that supply evidence for the suspicion of dream-visions in Graeco-Roman literature, but that do so in a slightly different way. The passages discussed above treat the subject of dream-visions intentionally. Perhaps even more compelling are less purposeful, passing references to suspicion of dream-visions. The following two texts provide good examples.

In book 7 of his *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes a troubled period of pestilence and disease at Rome. An ill farmer, named Titus Latinus, is brought to the council chamber of the senate. He relates a series of dreams in which he has been told by Jupiter Capitolinus to inform his fellow citizens that a recent religious procession was inadequate and displeasing to him, and that they must perform the rites again. Dionysius says that the farmer dismissed the first such dream: αὐτὸς δ' ἐκ τῶν ὕπνων ἔφησεν ἀναστὰς παρ' οὐδὲν ἡγήσασθαι τὸ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ἐν τι τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀπατηλῶν ὑπολαβεῖν ("But when he awoke, he said that he disregarded the dream, assuming it was one of many deceitful dreams"). ⁶⁸ Dionysius presents this story from a very sympathetic perspective, as though it was, in fact, a message from Jupiter, and one that required obedient compliance. Still, it is interesting to note that Titus Latinus first "assumes" (ὑπολαβεῖν) that it is simply "one of many deceitful" dreams (ἐν τι τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀπατηλῶν).

A similar reference is found in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. In 3.7, Chariton describes a dream in which Callirhoe sees Chaereas bound in chains. Her interpretation is that the chains signify Chaereas' death, and this dream "message" brings her tremendous grief. After this description, however, the narrator mentions Callirhoe's lingering hope: περιέσπασε δὲ τὸ πένθος ἐλπὶς τοῦ τάχα ζῆν ἐκείνον καὶ ψευδόμενον αὐτὴν γεγονέναι ("Hope that perhaps he was alive, and that she had had a false dream, diminished her grief"). ⁶⁹ As with dreams in other Greek novels, it is not the dream itself that turns out to be false in

⁶⁷ Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.94 (somnia et superstitionum colores ipsa iam facilitate auctoritatem perdiderunt).

⁶⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.68.4. Earnest Cary translates the latter part of this sentence "looking upon it as one of the deceitful dreams that are so common" (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* [trans. Earnest Cary; LCL; Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1943], 4:353).

⁶⁹ The term ψευδόμενος is interesting in itself. According to the *TLG*, the word

this case, but the character's interpretation of it. Chariton's use of the term ψευδόνειδος ("false dream") is striking, nevertheless.

Whereas the references found in *Od.* 19, *Hist.* 7.16, Aristotle, and Cicero dispute the general reliability of dreams in an explicit fashion, these last two examples offer perhaps an even stronger argument against Hanson's generic conclusions. Neither text sets out to devalue dream-visions. In fact, the dream-visions in both passages do presage events to come. What is interesting is that both disclose a common belief that some dreams are "deceptive."

Scholarly Attempts to Treat this Diverse Evidence

As noted earlier, in spite of significant evidence to the contrary, Hanson concludes that "the dream experience is universal and is matched by an almost universal belief in the dream as divine or supernatural,"⁷⁰ and that "exceptions to the attitude of faith in the dream ... are few."⁷¹ To draw such conclusions in spite of all evidence to the contrary is unhelpful. Out of the hundreds of references to dream-visions in Greek literature through the end of the first century CE, the descriptions supporting Hanson's claim surely outnumber the exceptions. As Hanson observes: "this assertion stands ... if only because dreams deemed non-significant were not worthy of reporting."⁷² The real problem with Hanson's claim is that it diminishes the importance of the contrary evidence and obscures the spectrum of beliefs regarding dream-visions in non-Jewish Graeco-Roman culture. It is to say that people of the Graeco-Roman world believed dream-visions to be revelatory, except when they did not. Instead, it is important to allow the evidence to speak for itself and to deal with the questions that arise from this evidence. On this point, the discussions of E.R. Dodds and Angelo Brelich are more illuminating.

Despite his frequent application of psychological (and especially Freudian) theories to the extant evidence,⁷³ Dodds offers a more bal-

occurs only in this passage. That Chariton would coin such a term, however, would seem to indicate a certain amount of suspicion of dreams in the underlying culture.

⁷⁰ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1396.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1398.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1396 n. 4.

⁷³ Dodds's own disclaimer written in 1950 rings with almost prophetic accuracy: "To my fellow-professionals I perhaps owe some defence of the use of which I have made in several places of recent anthropological and psychological observations and

anced view of dreams in ancient Greece. Beginning with the earliest literature, Dodds observes conflicting descriptions of dreams even within the Homeric epics.⁷⁴ He argues that these tensions are not the result of developing beliefs in antiquity (whereby *Od.* 19 would be regarded as later than *Od.* 4). Rather, Dodds contends that such texts suggest “a distinction between different types of dream-experience ... between significant and nonsignificant dreams.”⁷⁵ Less sensational than Hanson’s claim of widespread faith in dreams, Dodds’s assertion fits better with the available evidence.

One of the most interesting studies of dreams in the Graeco-Roman world is that of Angelo Brelich.⁷⁶ Brelich begins his discussion with an important caveat:

theories... I see here good reason to be cautious in applying to the Greeks generalizations based on non-Greek evidence, but none for the withdrawal of Greek scholarship into a self-imposed isolation... If the truth is beyond our grasp, the errors of to-morrow are still to be preferred to the errors of yesterday; for error in the sciences is only another name for the progressive approximation to truth” (*The Greeks and the Irrational* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951], viii–ix). S.R.F. Price clearly articulates the problems surrounding the application of such theories (especially Freudian psychology) to ancient cultures: “The acceptance of the universal claims of psychology, and the imposition of its theories on other societies, presents two serious problems. First ... the imposition of [such a] theory on ancient Greece is unlikely to be informative historically. ... it cannot make sense of the cultural configurations specific to that society... Second, there is the problem of the status of Freudian theory. The peculiarly asocial, apolitical nature of Freud’s theory of dreams is explicable in terms both of Freud’s own biography and of the general political context of his day. Such historicizing of Freud suggests ... that his theories may be culturally rather specific” (“The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World* [ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990], 368–369). In Dodds’s defense, he does eschew the use of Freudian classifications at certain points in his analysis (*Greeks and the Irrational*, 103). At other points, however, Freudian terminology is incorporated seamlessly into his discussion (104). Perhaps what is most disturbing to the modern reader is Dodds’s tendency to sound like ethnographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, drawing “helpful” analogies between Greek descriptions of dream experience and those of “contemporary primitives” (103). (For the influence of such anthropologists on Dodds, see *Greeks and the Irrational*, 121 n. 3.)

⁷⁴ Cf., for example, the dream texts of Homer, *Od.* 4 and 19 cited above.

⁷⁵ Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 106–107. To support his claim that this distinction persisted “throughout antiquity,” Dodds cites sources like Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.16, Artemidorus, and Macrobius.

⁷⁶ Angelo Brelich, “The Place of Dreams in the Religious World Concept of the Greeks,” in *The Dream and Human Societies* (ed. G.E. von Grunebaum and Roger Cailliois; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 293–301.

In a complex civilization like that of ancient Greece which developed, and therefore stratified, with extraordinary rapidity, no one expects to find just one attitude toward any phenomenon or a simple answer to any problem. In each particular case there is inevitably an extended range of subtle differences of opinion which leads from one position to its opposite.⁷⁷

Rather than asserting a general conclusion about the acceptance of dreams in this period, Brelich begins with a question: Why does one find tension over the reliability of dreams as early as the Homeric literature, and find that dreams are suggested to mean the opposite of what they appear to mean in later oneirocritical assessments like that of Artemidorus?⁷⁸ His interest in this particular question is that it gets to the root of what he regards as a “specifically Greek cultural orientation.”⁷⁹ The answer, for Brelich, lies in the “specifically Greek” conceptualization of the temporal and spatial origin of dreams: “To archaic Greek consciousness, dreams belonged to the spatial and temporal peripheries of the cosmos, to the antiworld that surrounds the world, to the antireality that is found outside real time and real space.”⁸⁰ For Homer, the “village of dreams” (δῆμος ὀνειρώων) lies past the Okeanos, near the meadow of asphodel, realm of the dead.⁸¹ Temporally, Dreams are included in certain genealogies of Greek mythology: for Hesiod, Dreams are the children of Night, as are Destiny, Doom, and Death.⁸² Dreams, therefore, are located in spatial and temporal proximity to other ambivalent forces. As a result, they can be related to both positive and negative perceptions of the supernatural.⁸³ Brelich’s analysis is both thought-provoking and beneficial, and provides a fair treatment of evidence related to questions about beliefs in the revelatory power of dreams.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 293. Although he does not mention it in this passage, Brelich includes beliefs in dreams during the Roman period in his assessment.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 294–295.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 294.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 300.

⁸¹ Ibid., 298; see Homer, *Od.* 24.11–14. Similar spatial locations are found in Virgil (*Aen.* 6) and Ovid (*Metam.* 11).

⁸² Brelich, “The Place of Dreams,” 299; see Hesiod, *Theog.* 212.

⁸³ Brelich, “The Place of Dreams,” 300–301.

Assessment of Dream-Visions in Graeco-Roman Culture

To summarize the evidence discussed thus far, it is important to note a number of developments. Because the purpose of this inquiry is to determine the general attitudes toward dream-visions in antiquity, evidence for and against the belief in dream-visions as a reliable medium of revelation has been presented synchronically. It may be helpful now to summarize this evidence diachronically. In the earliest Greek literature surveyed, the works of Homer, dreams were understood as coming from the nether regions. According to Penelope's speech in *Od.* 19, some were considered reliable and others were not—and this issue of reliability is paramount for the present discussion. Their reliability, however, had nothing to do with their source. They *all* came from the same place, but came via two different gates; their path determined whether they offered a true glimpse of future events.

By the Hellenistic period, attitudes toward dream-visions had polarized somewhat. The philosophical writings of Aristotle and Cicero reveal contempt for the idea that dream-visions have any revelatory capacity whatsoever. Both argue that dreams are merely physiological, that they stem from the activity of the mind during sleep. Their contempt, however, also indicates a corresponding belief in the power of dreams in the surrounding culture. Added to this "silent" evidence is an abundance of data confirming belief in the revelatory nature of dream-visions. These data are found in a broad cross-section of evidence, including literary references, temple inscriptions, and juridical material.

By the second century C.E., there is evidence that dream interpretation had evolved into an elaborate "science" in the eyes of some. Arguing for a definite distinction between dreams that reveal something of the future (ὀνείροι) and those that do not (ἐνύπνιοι), Artemidorus devised an encyclopedic list of dream symbols and their meaning for people in various circumstances. In the process of evaluating this broad body of evidence, the present discussion suggests that the theories of Dodds and Brelich reflect the diversity of data better than the oversimplification of Hanson. Having examined both positive and negative evaluations of the revelatory nature of dream-visions in non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman literature, it is necessary now to examine the various perspectives found in Jewish texts.

Dream-visions in Jewish Literature

Evidence from Jewish Scripture

As noted in the introduction, there are a number of Greek terms used to describe dream-visions. A similar variety of Hebrew terms is found in Jewish Scripture.⁸⁴ The most frequent examples are verbs and nouns formed on the roots **חזה**, **חלם**, and **ראה**. Luke's preferred term, **ὄραμα**,

⁸⁴ My use of the term "Jewish Scripture" rather than "Hebrew Bible" is based on a linguistic concern. By "Jewish Scripture," I do mean texts later canonized in the Hebrew Bible. However, Greek is the only language we can be certain Luke knew. Luke's quotations of, and direct allusions to, the LXX indicate that he was familiar with the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Since we cannot be sure that Luke knew Hebrew, or had access to Hebrew Scripture, I will use the term Jewish Scripture and will include the LXX in quotations of this material. Also, I do not mean to suggest that only eventually canonized material was regarded as "Scripture." Instead, I am using this term to distinguish the canonical material from other texts discussed below (e.g., OTA, DSS, OTP).

The subject of dream-visions in Jewish Scripture raises a number of questions. Certainly, there are significant differences between the complex descriptions of theophanies in various parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., Gen 16:7–16 and Ex 19:1–25) and the singular mention of the word "vision" to frame prophetic discourses (e.g., Nah 1:1 and Obad 1). There is a rich diversity in the portrayal of visionary phenomena in these texts. The present discussion focuses on the reliability of dream-visions as a source of revelation. Much of the scholarship that has been done on dreams and visions in Jewish Scripture emphasizes very different concerns (e.g., form-critical issues and comparisons between the biblical texts and other evidence from antiquity). Therefore, I will engage this scholarship only in a limited way.

Questions of form criticism are discussed in Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich's *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW 73; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1953), and refined further by Wolfgang Richter ("Traum und Traumdeutung im AT: Ihre Form und Verwendung," BZ 7 [1963]: 202–220). The following are examples of comparative studies: A. Caquot, "Les songes et leur interpretation selon Canaan et Israël," in *Les songes et leur interpretation* (Sources Orientales 2; Paris: Le Seuil, 1959), 101–124; Jerrold Cooper, "Sargon and Joseph: Dreams Come True," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Ivey* (ed. Ann Kort and Scott Morschauer; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 33–39; and A. Jeffers, "Divination by Dreams in Ugaritic Literature and in the Old Testament," IBS 12 (1990): 167–183.

For excellent discussions of theophany in Jewish Scripture, see the work of James Muilenburg ("The Speech of Theophany," HDB 28 [1964]: 35–47) and his student, Kenneth Kuntz (*The Self-revelation of God* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967]). For a discussion of theophany emphasizing comparisons with nonbiblical ANE material, see Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973 [especially chapter 7, "Yahweh and Baʿl"]); see also Patrick D. Miller (*The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], and Thomas W. Mann (*Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977]). Theodore Hiebert

is used to translate words from all three roots in the LXX.⁸⁵ There is some debate in scholarship regarding distinctions between dreams and visions in the Hebrew Bible—distinctions especially between derivatives of חלם and חזוה.⁸⁶ Initially, the present study will treat “dreams” (חלם) and “visions” (חזוה and ראה) separately. The question of distinctions will then be taken up. The Jewish Scriptures also suggest a variety of attitudes toward dreams and visions similar to that found in non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman culture. In some texts, dreams and visions are regarded as communication from God, conveying messages to be heeded. In other passages, dreams and visions are viewed negatively, usually as a manipulative tool in the hands of “false prophets.” Examples of both are offered below.⁸⁷

provides an interesting study of the relationship between theophany and geography (“Theophany in the OT,” *ABD* 6:505–511).

The visionary aspect of prophetic literature is the subject of a great deal of scholarship, much of it conducted from a socio-historical perspective. See, for example, Paul Hanson (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* [rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979]), Robert Wilson (*Prophecy and Society*), and R.J. Coggins (“Prophecy—True and False,” in *Of Prophets’ Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday* [ed. H.A. McKay and D.J.A. Clines; JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 80–94). For an excellent overview of issues related to later apocalyptic literature, see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1998).

One of the most comprehensive treatments of dreams in the Jewish material of the Hellenistic and imperial periods is that of Frances Flannery-Dailey (*Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* [Supplements to *JSJ* 90; Leiden: Brill, 2004]). Unfortunately, I became aware of this work only after substantially completing the present study. My treatment of dream-visions in Jewish texts provides background for the primary focus of the present study: dreams-visions in Luke-Acts. Thus, the discussion of dream-visions in Jewish Scripture and other Jewish sources offered here is necessarily limited. Those who seek a more thorough examination of this material will find it in the excellent work of Flannery-Dailey.

⁸⁵ It is used to translate forms of חלם only in the Aramaic portions of Daniel. Indeed, ὄραμα appears to be a favorite of the LXX translator of Daniel; the term occurs in LXX Dan more than in all other Jewish Scripture combined.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Jean-Marie Husser’s discussion in *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (trans. Jill M. Munro; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 145–151; and James E. Miller, “Dreams and Prophetic Visions,” *Bib* 71 (1990): 401–404. Both of these discussions are taken up below.

⁸⁷ As noted in the previous section, the purpose of this chapter is to provide general information regarding the understanding of dreams and visions in antiquity as background for the discussion of relevant material in Luke-Acts. I am interested primarily in the final form of the text. Matters relating to source, date, and hypothetical redaction will be included minimally, if at all.

Positive Evaluations of Dreams

The most well-known dream interpreter in Jewish Scripture is, of course, Joseph. The Joseph cycle contains a number of symbolic, or allegorical, dreams fitting Ottoson's description: "dreams needing interpretation are almost always experienced by non-Israelites, although the dream is sent by the God of Israel."⁸⁸ In Gen 40, the cupbearer and baker see dreams that disturb them.⁸⁹ When they mention their dream experiences to Joseph, along with their dismay that they have no access to a dream interpreter, he replies: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please recount them to me."⁹⁰ Although the narrator does not say explicitly that these dreams are sent by God, the context—Joseph's assertion that interpretation belongs to God, and his correct interpretation of the dreams—indicates that their dreams contain an accurate revelation of the future, and are presumably from a divine source.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Ottoson, "חלם," *TDOT* 4:430. Ottoson asserts that the symbolic dreams of Israelites are typically self-explanatory, like Joseph's dreams in Gen 37 (*Ibid.*).

⁸⁹ Gerhard von Rad argued that "the importance which prophetic dreams and interpretations of dreams here assume" indicates the "Elohistic" character of Gen 40 (*Genesis: A Commentary* [trans. John Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972], 370). More recently, this view has been opposed by Robert Gnuse ("Dreams in the Night—Scholarly Mirage or Theophanic Formula?: The Dream Report as a Motif of the So-called Elohistic Tradition," *BZ* 39 [1995]: 34).

⁹⁰ Gen 40:8 (לֵּאמֹר / הֲלוֹא לְאֱלֹהִים פְּתָרִימִים סִפְרוּנָא לִי) / οὐχὶ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ διασάφησις αὐτῶν ἐστιν; δοῦναι σοὶ οὖν μοι). Unless otherwise noted, the passages cited in this section will reflect my own translation of the Hebrew text. Relevant Hebrew and Greek citations will be given in the notes. My choice to translate the Hebrew is based on a desire to treat the subject of dream-visions from a broader historical perspective. Luke certainly read this material in Greek, but the version of the LXX available to him is open to question. Where the LXX differs significantly from the Hebrew, that text will be discussed in the notes as well.

Verse 8 is key for Westermann's interpretation of Gen 40: "The author who has inserted the dream motif into his narrative is at the same time a theologian in his own right... . Joseph is saying that God's action is not confined to human institutions... . God can confer the gift of interpreting dreams on anyone; he can work on any person through another" (*Genesis 37–50: A Commentary* [trans. John J. Scullion, S.J.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986], 79). Viewing the passage from a slightly different angle, von Rad considered Joseph's answer "completely polemic" (*Genesis*, 371). Brueggemann suggests even greater theological import than Westermann. He argues that the dreams in Gen 40 are "theonomous": "They have to do with God and God's rule. They tell what God will do, albeit in the rule of the Pharaoh. They claim that only God knows the future and only God decides the future" (*Genesis*, 323).

⁹¹ Nahum Sarna compares this passage to Gen 37:5–11, about which he observes: "God does not figure explicitly in the content of [Joseph's dream]; yet it is taken for granted that He is the source of the message being conveyed" (*Genesis: The Traditional*

The next example may seem initially counterintuitive. In Num 12:6–8, the LORD elevates Moses in response to the dissent of Miriam and Aaron. The primary point of the passage seems to be to show that Moses is far closer to God than is any other prophet. The LORD speaks “mouth to mouth” with Moses, and Moses “looks upon the form of the LORD.”⁹² The contrast drawn between verses 6 and 8 indicates that Moses has a more intimate communication with God than do prophets. In this passage, therefore, one finds an ambivalent portrayal of prophetic dreams. There can be no question that they come from God: “When you have a prophet, I, the LORD, will make myself known to him in a vision; in a dream I will speak with him.”⁹³ At the same time, however, God’s communication with Moses is elevated through a subtle denigration of dream revelation: “Face to face I speak with him, my message apparent rather than obscure. He sees the form of the LORD. Why, therefore, were you not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?” (12:8).⁹⁴ For the purpose of the present discussion, it is

Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation. Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 256). Sarna’s work also includes the same generalization that has been discussed at length earlier in this chapter. Commenting on the tension between Joseph and his brothers, Sarna notes: “The third and most menacing source of discord was Joseph’s dreams. This situation is easily understood when viewed against the cultural background of the times. Everywhere the dream was recognized as a means of divine communication... . The predictive aspect of dreams was universally assumed in the ancient world, and this was reason enough for the brothers to take Joseph seriously” (256). Even in this same comment, Sarna suggests an apparent contradiction to the preceding statement: “However, since the dream was also recognized to be inseparable from the personality of the dreamer, reflecting his own needs and wishes, Joseph bore, in the eyes of his brothers, a measure of responsibility for his highly egocentric vision of superiority and lordship” (256). Even more contradictory is Sarna’s later comment: “The possibility of an idle dream was recognized by the ancients” (257). He suggests that this is the reason why dreams in the Joseph cycle come in pairs. Sarna offers supporting evidence for neither of these observations.

⁹² Num 12:8 (יְהוָה יִבְרַח בּוֹ וּמִרְיָאָה וְאַהֲרֹן / στόμα κατὰ στόμα λαλήσω αὐτῷ, ἐν εἶδει καὶ οὐ δι’ αἰνιγμάτων, καὶ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου εἶδεν).

⁹³ Num 12:6 (אִם־יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֲכֶם יְהוָה בְּמַרְאֶה אֵלָיו אֶתְדַע בְּחֹלֹם אֲדַבְּרֶנּוּ / ἐὰν γένηται προφητὴς ὑμῶν κυρίῳ, ἐν ὁράματι αὐτῷ γνωσθήσομαι καὶ ἐν ὕπνῳ λαλήσω αὐτῷ).

⁹⁴ Baruch A. Levine observes the play on words in verses 6 and 8. God speaks to the prophets in dreams and visions (*mar’ah*); but God speaks “clearly” (*bemar’eh*) to Moses, rather than in “riddles” (*chiddot*) (*Numbers 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 4A; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 331). Dennis T. Olson draws a comparison with the message of Jesus in the NT: “The difference between Moses’ direct communication with God and other prophets to whom God spoke only in dreams and visions finds a parallel in the function of Jesus’ parables about the kingdom of God... . ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it

more important that this passage affirms dreams and visions as a way in which God communicates with prophets.⁹⁵

Another positive presentation of dreams is found in the story of Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4–14).⁹⁶ After sacrificing, Solomon falls asleep at Gibeon, and the Lord “appeared to Solomon in a dream of the night and said, ‘Ask what I should give you’” (1 Kgs 3:5). Solomon asks for “an understanding mind” so that he might govern God’s people (3:9). The Lord is pleased that Solomon requested wisdom, rather than long life or riches (3:10–11). In response, the Lord grants Solomon the wisdom for which he asks, as well as wealth and longevity (3:11–14). The Lord not only grants these things to Solomon, but grants them to an exceptional degree: in terms of wisdom, wealth, and honor, the Lord decrees that no one past or future will compare with Solomon (3:12–13). This dream narrative, therefore, not only establishes God’s approval of Solomon, but even elevates Solomon to the pinnacle of human wisdom, wealth, and honor.

Joel 2:28 [MT 3:1] describes what will happen after the Day of the LORD: “And it shall be after this that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your elderly will dream dreams and your young will see visions.”⁹⁷ This prophecy—a prophecy of programmatic importance for the text of Acts⁹⁸—depicts the widespread dissemination of God’s spirit resulting in widespread prophetic activity. The vehicles of this far-reaching divine communication are dreams and visions.⁹⁹

has not been given’ (Matt 13:10)” (*Numbers* [Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 72).

⁹⁵ As stated above, I am concerned with the final form of the text. For an argument that these verses may be a later interpolation, see Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 146–147.

⁹⁶ Mordechai Cogan discusses some of the comparisons drawn between this account and other ancient literature, particularly the Egyptian *Königsnovelle*. He notes, however, that the substance of Solomon’s dream message is unlike Egyptian examples; cf. *ANET*, 449 (1 *Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 190–191).

⁹⁷ והָיָה אַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֲשַׁפּוּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר וְנָבְאוּ בְנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם וְקִנְיֹנֵיכֶם חֲלֹמוֹת יַחֲלֹמוּן יִרְאוּ / καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα, καὶ προφητεῦσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν, καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν, καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνύπνια ἐνυπνιασθήσονται, καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὀράσεις ὄψονται.

⁹⁸ See Acts 2:14–21.

⁹⁹ Commentaries on this passage often compare Joel’s positive view of dreams and visions to the negative view found in Jer 23 (this latter passage will be discussed in the next section). These comparisons raise interesting questions. Hans Walter Wolff argues: “If Joel sees prophetic existence as being established through dreams and visions, the

One also finds positive presentations of dreams within the wisdom material. In Job 33, Elihu corrects Job, arguing that God does communicate with people: “In a dream, a vision of the night, when sleep falls on people in bedtime slumbers, then [God] opens their ear and seals them in correction.”¹⁰⁰ Here one notices first the positive assessment of dreams and visions as a form of divine communication. Although these are messages of chastisement, they nevertheless come from God and are for the benefit of the recipient.¹⁰¹ It is also interesting that “dream” and “vision” are essentially equated in this text, with חזיון serving as an appositive of חלום.

The final examples offered here come from Daniel. The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel’s interpretation of these dreams, feature prominently in the initial chapters of this text. In Dan 2, the king dreams a troubling dream (2:1). He then threatens his diviners, conjurers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans with death if they cannot tell him both the dream and its interpretation (2:2–13). Before the executions take place, the dream and its interpretation are revealed to Daniel in a “vision of the night” (2:19). Daniel tells the king that no person can do what the king asks; there is, however, “a God in heaven who reveals secrets” (2:28). Daniel then proceeds to tell the king that his dream portends the rise and fall of kingdoms after his own (2:36–45). In Dan 4, Nebuchadnezzar has another dream (4:4–18). Daniel interprets this dream as a portent of what will happen to the king because of the king’s own arrogance: he will be cut off from human society, eat grass like an animal, and bathe only in the dew for seven seasons (4:23). After these things had come to pass (4:33), Nebuchadnezzar praises God (4:34–37).

Jeremicanic polemic against dreamers (Jer 23:25) is apparently completely foreign to him; he is rather influenced in this respect by the Torah” (*Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* [trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress: 1977], 66). For this positive image in the Torah, Wolff adduces Num 12:6. James Crenshaw, however, notes a difference between Joel and the Torah: “Whether ecstatic prophecy ... dreams ... or visions ... the same direct access to YHWH is assumed.... The elitism underlying Num 12:6 has completely disappeared in Joel’s formulation” (*Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995], 165–166).

¹⁰⁰ Job 33:15–16 (חֲלוֹם חֲזִיוֹן לַיְלָה בְּנֹפֶל תְּרִדְמָה עַל־אָנָשִׁים בְּתַנּוּמוֹת עָלֵי מִשְׁכָּב: אִו יִגְלֶה) / ἢ ἐν μελέτῃ νυκτερινῇ, ὡς ὅταν ἐπιπίπτῃ δεινὸς φόβος ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους ἐπὶ νυσταγμάτων ἐπὶ κοίτης· τότε ἀνακαλύπτει νοῦν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν εἰδεσὶν φόβου τοιοῦτοις αὐτοὺς ἐξεφώβησεν).

¹⁰¹ See Job 33:17–30.

Daniel, however, is not presented only as the interpreter of others' dreams. In 7:1, Daniel dreams of four beasts (7:3–8), and watches as the Ancient of Days sits in judgment over these beasts (7:9–12), and as the Ancient of Days gives dominion to one like the Son of Man (7:13–14). Throughout the book of Daniel, dreams are understood as revelations from God. Daniel is the interpreter of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, but for the interpretation of his own dream he must ask one of the figures standing in the presence of the Ancient of Days (7:16).¹⁰² Although the interpreter may change, the source and reliability of all of these dream experiences remains absolute. As with the example from Job, it is also important to observe that dream (חלם) and vision (חזו) are used interchangeably in this apocalyptic text.¹⁰³ Having seen positive evaluations of dreams across a broad spectrum of Jewish Scripture, it is necessary to examine texts where dreams are portrayed negatively.

Negative Evaluations of Dreams

Many of the negative statements about dreams in Jewish Scripture are found in warnings against false prophecy. These texts are difficult to interpret as evidence of a general attitude toward dreams. They reveal negative associations between dreams and false prophecy, but do not specifically eliminate the possibility that dreams can reveal the will of God. Despite this ambiguity, this evidence is important inasmuch as it informs a broad understanding of dreams in Jewish literature.

The writer of Deut 13, for example, does not say that dreams are evil or misleading *per se*. Rather, they can be a tool in the hand of those who might lead the Israelites astray:

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams should arise among you and give you a sign or a portent, and the sign or portent he tells you comes to pass, so that he says, "Let us follow after other gods whom you do not know and let us serve them," do not listen to this prophet or this dreamer

¹⁰² As C.L. Seow observes: "Now the servant of God is not one who proclaims the Word of God to others, but one who receives it. Daniel does stand not (*sic*) over and against the wicked, he stands with them in being subject to divine will for all humanity. Indeed, the solution to the mystery of the dream visions will come not from a gifted earthly sage, which is how Daniel is portrayed in chapters 1–6, but from a celestial intermediary" (*Daniel* [WBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003], 101).

¹⁰³ The phrase "vision of [one's] head" (חזו ראש) is often used as an appositive for "dream" (חלם) and vice versa in the Aramaic text; see, for example, Dan 2:28, 4:2, and 7:1.

of dreams. The Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul.¹⁰⁴

Rather than questioning dreams as a phenomenon—even a legitimate prophetic phenomenon—this passage warns against trusting any divinatory dreams suggesting that the Israelites worship other deities. Indeed, the nature or origin of these dreams is not the focal point of this text. Although 13:3 says that such messages are a means by which the LORD might “test” the Israelites, this text does not identify God as the source of the dreams in question.¹⁰⁵ Instead, the audience is given a simple standard: diviners or dreamers who suggest the worship of other gods are not to be trusted. Although it does not denigrate dreams altogether, this text does indicate clearly that some dreams must be regarded with suspicion—they must be regarded as experiences that do not reveal the will of God.

A similar, and even more emphatic, message regarding the use of dreams is found in Jeremiah 23:

I have heard what the prophets said, prophesying lies in my name: “I have dreamed. I have dreamed.” How long will it be in the hearts of the prophets to prophesy falsehood, to be prophets of deceit? They think they will make my people forget my name with their dreams that they recount to one another, even as their ancestors forgot my name for the sake of Baal. Let the prophet who has a dream recount it; let the one who has my word speak my true word. What is grain in relation to straw, says the LORD.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Deut 13:1–3 [MT 13:2–4] (כִּי־יָקוּם בְּקֶרְבְּךָ נְבִיא אוֹ חֵלֶם הָלוֹם וְנָתַן אֵלָיִךְ אוֹת אוֹ מוֹפֵת): וּבֹא הָאוֹת וְהַמּוֹפֵת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֵלָיִךְ לֵאמֹר נִלְכָּה אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יְדַעְתָּם וְנִדְבָּעְךָ: לֹא תִשְׁמַע אֶל־דִּבְרֵי הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא אוֹ אֶל־חֹלֶם הַחֵלֶם הַהוּא כִּי מִנְסֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיכֶם אֶתְכֶם לְדַעַת הַיִּשְׁכָּם אִהְיֶה אִתְּךָ הַיִּשְׁכָּם אִהְיֶה אִתְּךָ כְּכֹל־נִפְשָׁכֶם: / ἐάν δὲ ἀναστῇ ἐν σοὶ προφήτης ἢ ἐνυπνιαζόμενος ἐνύπνιον καὶ δῶ σοι σημεῖον ἢ τέρας καὶ ἔλθῃ τὸ σημεῖον ἢ τὸ τέρας, ὃ ἐλάλησεν πρὸς σὲ λέγων πορευθῶμεν καὶ λατρεύσωμεν θεοῖς ἐτέροις, οὓς οὐκ οἶδατε, οὐκ ἀκούσεσθε τῶν λόγων τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου ἢ τοῦ ἐνυπνιαζομένου τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἐκείνο, ὅτι πειράζει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι εἰ ἀγαπᾶτε κύριον τὸν θεὸν ὑμῶν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς ὑμῶν).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Micaiah ben Imlah’s description of a “lying spirit” (רוח שקר) sent out by God to deceive Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:17–23).

¹⁰⁶ Jer 23:25–28 (מִתִּי הֵישׁ בְּלֹב הַנְּבִאִים נְבִיא הַשֶּׁקֶר וְנִבִּיא תְּרֵמֶת לֵבָם: הַחֲשָׁבִים לְהַשְׁכִּיחַ אֶת־עַמִּי שְׁמִי בְּחִלּוּמָם אֲשֶׁר יִסְפְּרוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר יִסְכְּחוּ אֲבוֹתָם אֶת־שְׁמִי בְּבַעַל: הַנְּבִיא אֲשֶׁר־אֲתוֹ הָלוֹם יִסְפֹּר הָלוֹם וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרִי אֲתוֹ יְדַבֵּר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת מִה־לִּבָּן אֶת־הַכֹּהֵן נֹאֲמֵי־יְהוָה: / ἡκουσα ἃ λαλοῦσιν οἱ προφῆται, ἃ προφητεύουσιν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου ψευδῇ λέγοντες ἡνυπνιασάμην ἐνύπνιον. ἕως πότε ἔσται ἐν καρδίᾳ τῶν προφητῶν τῶν προφητευόντων ψευδῇ καὶ ἐν τῷ προφητεύειν αὐτοὺς τὰ θελήματα καρδίας αὐτῶν; τῶν λογιζομένων τοῦ ἐπιλαθῆσθαι τοῦ νόμου μου ἐν τοῖς ἐνυπνίοις αὐτῶν, ἃ δηγοῦντο ἕκαστος τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, καθάπερ ἐπελάθοντο οἱ πατέρες

As in Deut 13, this passage offers warnings against the use of dreams by “false prophets.” This text is more explicit about the source of these dreams. In v. 25, there is a description of prophets attempting to support their prophecy with claims that they have received information in dreams. Verse 26, however, states that these are prophets of the deceit of their own hearts. This may imply that these prophets are making up their dreams, but v. 28 would suggest that the dreams are real, rather than mere fabrications. Although this depiction of dreams is more emphatically negative than that found in Deut 13, the passage as a whole is more concerned with the issue of false prophecy.¹⁰⁷ As far as dreams are concerned, they seem here to be denigrated as a source of revelation.

A very negative view of dreams is also found in so-called Second Zechariah: “the diviners see (חזו) falsehood and worthless dreams.”¹⁰⁸ This statement is augmented by further denigrations of prophecy in 13:3–4:

If a man prophesies again, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, “you will not live, because you utter deception in the name of the LORD.” His father and mother who bore him will cut him down when he prophesies. It will happen on that day that the prophets will be ashamed, each one of his vision when he prophesies. They will not wear the hairy cloak in order to deceive.¹⁰⁹

What is perhaps most perplexing about these passages is their discontinuity with the first eight chapters (so-called First Zechariah), in which visionary language figures prominently.¹¹⁰ Bracketing the prob-

αὐτῶν τοῦ ὀνόματός μου ἐν τῇ Βαβλ. ὁ προφήτης, ἐν ᾧ τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἐστίν, διηγησάσθω τὸ ἐνύπνιον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν ᾧ ὁ λόγος μου πρὸς αὐτόν, διηγησάσθω τὸν λόγον μου ἐπ’ ἀληθείας. τί τὸ ἄχρυν πρὸς τὸν οἶτον; οὕτως οἱ λόγοι μου, λέγει κύριος).

¹⁰⁷ Jer 27:9 and 29:8 offer similar exhortations not to be deceived by false proclamations; in each passage, dreams are included and linked with divination.

¹⁰⁸ Zec 10:2 (חֲזוּ הַלְלוֹת שָׁוָא / καὶ οἱ μάντις ὁράσεις ψευδεῖς, καὶ τὰ ἐνύπνια ψευδῆ ἐλάλουν).

¹⁰⁹ הָיָה כִּי יִנְבֵּא אִישׁ עוֹד וְאָמַר אֱלֹהִים אֲבִיו וְאָמַר יְלָדָיו לֹא תַחֲיָה כִּי שֶׁקֶר דִּבֶּרֶת בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וְדִקְרָהוּ אֲבִיהוּ וְאָמַר יְלָדָיו בְּהַנְבֵּאוֹ: הָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִבְשׁוּ הַנְּבִיאִים אִישׁ מִחֻזְנוֹ בְּהַנְבֵּאוֹתָיו וְלֹא יִלְבְּשׁוּ אֶדְרֶת: שֶׁקֶר לְמִצֵּן כָּחֵשׁ / καὶ ἔσται ἐὰν προφητεύσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἔτι, καὶ ἐρεῖ πρὸς αὐτόν ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ οἱ γεννήσαντες αὐτόν οὐ ζήσῃ, ὅτι ψευδῆ ἐλάλησας ἐπ’ ὀνόματι κυρίου: καὶ συμποδιοῦσιν αὐτόν ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ οἱ γεννήσαντες αὐτόν ἐν τῷ προφητεύειν αὐτόν. καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ κατασχυνηθήσονται οἱ προφῆται, ἕκαστος ἐκ τῆς ὁράσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ προφητεύειν αὐτόν, καὶ ἐνδύσονται δέρεσιν τριχίνην ἀνθ’ ὧν ἐψεύσαντο.

¹¹⁰ Zec 1–8 provide a detailed description of no less than eight prophetic visions (1:1–17; 1:18–21 [2:1–4]; 2:1–5 [2:5–9]; 3:1–10; 4:1–14; 5:1–4; 5:5–11; and 6:1–8).

lem of consistency,¹¹¹ this text offers evidence of a negative perception of dream phenomena. It does not suggest that the diviners fabricate their dreams, but that the dreams they see are “worthless.”

There is also evidence that some Israelites perceived dreams—or at least some dreams—in a manner similar to the way they are described by Aristotle.¹¹² These texts portray dreams, not as communication from God, but as meaningless experiences. Isaiah 29:8 reveals such an attitude: “Just as a hungry man dreams he is eating, but wakes up hungry, and just as a thirsty man dreams he is drinking but wakes up faint and longing for water, thus shall be the multitude of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.”¹¹³ The dreams in this text are linked explicitly to bodily causes. Another example of this perspective is found in Ecclesiastes: “the dream comes with an abundance of concern. ... with an abundance of dreams there is emptiness and words abound.”¹¹⁴ It has been argued that the “dreams” in these verses should be understood

¹¹¹ A number of views have been put forward attempting to reconcile the seemingly positive view of prophecy in Zec 1–8 with this statement in chapter 13. K.R. Schaefer defends the final unity in this way: “Even though explicit citation of the prophetic sources is absent from chaps. 9–14 and the figure of the prophet is portrayed as discredited in 13:2–6, the frequent evocation of the prophetic oracles demonstrates the author’s sustained trust in the relevance of the prophetic tradition which was manifest in the early chapters” (“Zechariah 14 and the Composition of the Book of Zechariah” *RB* [1993]: 375). Others give more weight to Zech 13:2–6. Coming to the text with a historical-critical perspective, D.L. Petersen has argued that this “unit is a devastating polemic against everything prophetic. ... [this text] probably derive[s] from a period, the late sixth or early fifth century, in which prophetic traditionists were confronted with some other group who claimed to be prophets. Their response was to argue that prophetic performance in the classical mold was a thing of the past, and any attempts at prophetic performance were to be rejected” (*Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* [SBLMS 23; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977], 37–38). Following a line similar to the idea of “prophetic traditionists,” R.J. Coggins notes: “When a religious community has a stake in the reliability and authority of particular writings, then it is of crucial importance to uphold the reliability and integrity of those writings—the more so when writings are understood as prophetic in this predictive sense, having reference to events that were to take place at a time long after the lifetime of the prophets themselves” (“Prophecy—True and False,” 91).

¹¹² See the discussion of Aristotle above.

¹¹³ הַיְהִי כְּאִשֶּׁר יִחְלֹם הָרָעֵב וְהָנָה אוֹכֵל וְהָקִיץ וְרִיקָה נִפְשׁוֹ וְכִאֲשֶׁר יִחְלֹם הַצָּמֵא וְהָנָה שֹׂתֵה וְהָקִיץ / הַיְהִי כִּי יִהְיֶה הַמֶּזֶן כָּל-הַיּוֹמִים הַצָּבֵאִים עַל-הָרָעִיץ / ὥς οἱ ἐν ὕπνῳ πίνοντες καὶ ἐσθionτες, καὶ ἐξαναστάντων μάταιον αὐτῶν τὸ ἐνύπνιον, καὶ ὃν τρόπον ἐνυπνιάζεται ὁ διψῶν ὡς πίνων καὶ ἐξαναστὰς ἔτι διψᾷ, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς κενὸν ἤλπισεν, οὕτως ἔσται ὁ πλοῦτος πάντων τῶν ἔθνων, ὅσοι ἐπεστράτευσαν ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος Σιών.

¹¹⁴ Eccl 5:3, 7 [MT 5:2, 6] בָּא הַחֲלוֹם בְּרַב עֵינָן ... בְּרַב חֲלָמוֹת וְהַבְלִים וְדִבְרִים הָרְבָּה / παραγίνεται ἐνύπνιον ἐν πλήθει περισπασμοῦ... ἐν πλήθει ἐνυπνίων καὶ ματαιώτητες καὶ λόγοι πολλοί).

more abstractly as something “unreal and ephemeral.”¹¹⁵ In any case, the references to dreams in Ecclesiastes hardly evoke the image of revelatory communication from God.

As noted already in the examples from non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature, texts offering a negative evaluation of dreams are perhaps a numerical minority as compared with those depicting dreams positively in Jewish Scripture. These exceptions, however, are just as important as their Graeco-Roman counterparts for understanding Jewish perspectives on dreams. Again, it is important not to generalize. Texts offering evaluations of dream phenomena must be evaluated on an individual basis.

Positive Evaluations of Visions

There are numerous texts that feature a positive depiction of visions.¹¹⁶ A few examples of such positive evaluation will suffice for the purposes of this discussion. In various ancestral narratives, God communicates directly with people through visions.¹¹⁷ Gen 15:1 portrays a vision as the vehicle of a divine promise to Abram: “After these things, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield for you; your reward will become abundant.’”¹¹⁸ Abram’s response is interesting; he immediately challenges God: “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I go on childless? The heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus” (15:2).¹¹⁹ A dialogue ensues in which the LORD to reassure Abram, promising that his own offspring will number as the stars of heaven (15:4–5). Verse 6 indicates that Abram “trusted the LORD, and (the LORD) counted it as righteousness for him,”

¹¹⁵ See C.L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18C; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 200. Seow argues that קְלִמּוֹת וְהִבָּלִים should be read as a hendiadys, “[reinforcing] the idea of emptiness” (197).

¹¹⁶ Most of these involve the roots רָאָה and חָזָה.

¹¹⁷ By “directly,” I mean to emphasize that many of these visions involve a dialogue between God and the character in question. Thus, even if the text begins with an expression like “the word of the Lord” (as it does in Gen 15), the ensuing dialogue suggests a conversation rather than a one-sided proclamation.

¹¹⁸ אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם בַּמַּחֲזָה לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִי מִן לִי / שְׂכָרְךָ הָרֶבֶה מְאֹד / μετὰ δὲ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ἐγενήθη ῥῆμα κυρίου πρὸς Ἀβραμ ἐν ὄραματι λέγων μὴ φοβοῦ, Ἀβραμ ἐγὼ ὑπερασπίζω σου· ὁ μισθός σου πολλὸς ἔσται σφόδρα.

¹¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה מִה־תִּתֶּן־לִי וְאֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ עֲרִירִי וּבֶן־מֶשֶׁק בֵּיתִי הוּא דֹמֶשֶׁק אֱלִיעֶזֶר / λέγει δὲ Ἀβραμ δέσποτα, τί μοι δώσεις; ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπολούμαι ἄτεκνος· ὁ δὲ υἱὸς Μασεκ τῆς οἰκογενεῦς μου, οὗτος Δαμασκὸς Ἐλιεζερ.

but the promise of land in v. 7 causes Abram to dispute further the LORD's message: "O Lord GOD, how will I know that I will possess it" (15:8).¹²⁰ This passage is interesting for the present discussion because it indicates a positive evaluation of visions even though the recipient of the vision questions its message. Abram has to be persuaded that these promises will come to pass, but the twice repeated אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה (15:2, 8) indicates that Abram has no doubt that God is the source of his vision.

Other passages in the Pentateuch also depict God speaking to people through visions. In Gen 46:2, God speaks to Israel in a "vision of the night" (בְּמִרְאָת הַלַּיְלָה) at Beer-sheba. This same term (מִרְאָה) is used to describe the burning bush theophany in Exod 3:3.¹²¹ In Num 24:4, Balaam begins his oracle with the self-description: "the oracle of the one hearing the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty."¹²² Further, one often finds vision language used in the first verse of prophetic texts,¹²³ framing what follows as a visionary revelation from God. Jewish Scripture is replete with positive evaluations of visionary phenomenon, but there are also other evaluations—texts in which visions are presented negatively.

Negative Evaluations of Visions

Keeping in mind the examination of negative perspectives on dreams above, it should be no surprise that Jeremiah contains some of the most caustic statements against prophetic visions in Jewish Scripture. Jeremiah 14:14 provides the most thorough example: "And the LORD said to me, 'deceit is what the prophets prophesy in my name; I did not send them, neither did I command them or speak to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, worthlessness, and the deceitfulness of their own heart.'"¹²⁴ As with the examination of dreams above, it is

¹²⁰ On Luke's allusion to this verse, see the discussion of the appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah in chapter 4 below.

¹²¹ In the LXX version of this text, מִרְאָה is translated by Luke's preferred ὄραμα.

¹²² נֶאֱמַר שָׁמַע אֶמְרֵי-אֵל אֲשֶׁר מִחוּה שְׁדֵי יְהוָה / ἀκούων λόγια θεοῦ, ὅστις ὄρασιν θεοῦ εἶδεν ἐν ὕπνῳ; note the addition of ἐν ὕπνῳ in the LXX to indicate a vision occurring during sleep.

¹²³ See, for example, the first verse of Isaiah, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.

¹²⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי שֶׁקֶר הַנְּבִאִים נְבִאִים בְּשֵׁמִי לֹא שְׁלָחְתִּים וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים וְלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵיהֶם חֲזוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי שֶׁקֶר וְקֶסֶם וְאֵלֹל (וְאֵלִיל) וְתַרְמוֹת (וְתַרְמִית) לְבָם הֵמָּה מִתְנַבְּאִים לָכֶם / καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς με ψευδῆ οἱ προφηταὶ προφητεύουσιν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, οὐκ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς καὶ

not visions *per se* that are debunked here, but the specific visions of the prophets whom Jeremiah opposes.¹²⁵ The source of these visions is questioned explicitly: the LORD did not send these prophets; the LORD did not command these prophets; the LORD did not even speak to these prophets.¹²⁶

In Micah 3:5–8,¹²⁷ one finds the assertion that the LORD punishes those who prophesy falsely by depriving them of revelation through visions: “therefore, your night will be devoid of vision, your darkness devoid of divination.”¹²⁸ Lamentations 2:9 describes a similar deprivation of visions from the prophets of Jerusalem: “There is no instruction; moreover, her prophets do not see a vision from the LORD.”¹²⁹ This lack of authentic visions has not stopped the prophets from prophesying, however, as seen in Lam 2:14: “Your prophets have seen for you emptiness and whitewash; they have not uncovered your iniquity so as to restore your fortune. They have seen for you empty and enticing oracles.”¹³⁰ Like those in Jeremiah, these examples do not denigrate all visions as possible vehicles of revelation, but dispute the legitimacy of specific prophetic visions.

The Question of Distinctions Between Dreams and Visions

Hanson’s conclusions regarding the impracticality, or impossibility, of distinguishing between “dreams” and “visions” in Graeco-Roman literature were noted above. The present discussion of dreams and visions

οὐκ ἐνετειλάμην αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐκ ἐλάλησα πρὸς αὐτούς· ὅτι ὁράσεις ψευδεῖς καὶ μαντείας καὶ οἰωνίσματα καὶ προαιρέσεις καρδίας αὐτῶν αὐτοὶ προφητεύουσιν ὑμῖν.

¹²⁵ Although one does not find in Jeremiah some of the characteristic *חזו* language of other prophets (see note 123 above), it still begins with visionary phenomena: “and the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘what do you see?’” (יְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי) / *לֵאמֹר מַה-אַתָּה רֹאֶה* / ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρὸς με λέγων τί σὺ ὁράς [Jer 1:11; see also 1:13]).

¹²⁶ Jeremiah levels a similar charge in 23:16, in which these false prophets are described as telling “visions of their own heart” (חֲזוֹן לִבָּם) / ὁρασιν ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτῶν).

¹²⁷ Micah 3:5, cf. 3:11; the prophets are charged with prophesying for money.

¹²⁸ Micah 3:6 (מְקַסֵּם לָכֶם מְחֹוֹן וְחֶשֶׁכָּה לָכֶם מְחֹוֹן לִלְלָה לָכֶן / διὰ τοῦτο νῦν ὑμῖν ἔσται ἔξ ὁράσεως, καὶ σκοτία ὑμῖν ἔσται ἐκ μαντείας).

¹²⁹ יְהוָה חֲזוֹן מְהֵרָה לֹא-מִצֵּיָהּ גַם-תּוֹרָה גַּם-יֵצֵא תוֹרָה / οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος, καὶ γε προφητὰ αὐτῆς οὐκ εἶδον ὅρασιν παρὰ κυρίου.

¹³⁰ נְבִיאֵיךְ חָזוּ לְךָ שׁוֹא וְתַפֵּל וְלֹא-גִלּוֹ עַל-עֲוֹנֶיךָ לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבִיתֶךָ (read וַיַּחְזוּ לְךָ מִשָּׂאוֹת) / שׁוֹא וְתַפֵּל / προφητὰί σου εἶδοσαν σοι μάταια καὶ ἀφροσύνην καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκάλυσαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀδικίαν σου τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι αἰχμαλωσίαν σου καὶ εἶδοσαν σοι λήμματα μάταια καὶ ἐξώσματα.

in Jewish Scripture has examined “dreams” (חלם) separately from “visions” (חזה and ראה). Some scholars have chosen to maintain a rigid distinction between the two.¹³¹ This distinction is often blurred, however, since there are passages that describe “dreams” and “visions” synonymously.¹³² Arguments over semantic association¹³³ or philological appropriation¹³⁴ are noteworthy, but beyond the scope of the present discussion. It is far more important to observe that terms from all three roots are evaluated both positively and negatively with regard to divine revelation.

Summary of Dreams and Visions as Revelation in Jewish Scripture

As with the non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman material discussed above, the majority of the evidence from Jewish Scripture suggests a belief that dreams and visions offer a reliable form of revelatory communication from God. This stands to reason, if only because dreams and visions would otherwise not be mentioned with such frequency. There are a small number of texts that reveal an attitude toward dreams similar to that found in Aristotle: Isa 29:8 and Eccl 5:2 relate dreams to the physical and psychological circumstances of the dreamer. For the most part, negative evaluations of dreams and visions are couched in warnings about false prophecy. In such contexts, one does not find a denial of the revelatory potential of dreams and visions *per se*, but

¹³¹ See Jepsen, “חזה,” *TDOT* 4:283, 290. Jepsen is concerned to show that derivatives of the root חזה are associated with prophetic activity, and argues that such “visions” are “clearly distinguished” from “dreams.” Jepsen does admit, however, that the terms are combined in some passages like Isa 29:7, Zech 10:2, and Joel 3:1 (*Ibid.*, 283); see also Num 12:6; Job 33:15; Dan 2:28, 4:2, and 7:1. The fact that the terms are combined in a number of texts, along with the fact that חזה occurs outside of prophetic visionary contexts in passages like Pss 17:15 and 63:3 (Jepsen, *TDOT* 4:288–289), may suggest that such a distinction is unhelpful. Husser suggests that the coalescing of dreams and visions may be a late development, and argues that “in classical prophecy, dreams and visions are two distinct phenomena” (*Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 150–151).

¹³² See the passages cited in the previous note. James Miller has argued that passages like Joel 3:1 and Job 33:15 are “poor proof of the identity between dreams and prophetic visions,” because “it is common for poets to link terms which would normally remain distinct in prose” (“Dreams and Prophetic Visions,” 401).

¹³³ That is, the significant, although not exclusive, association of חזה with prophetic activity.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Jepsen’s discussion of חזה as an Aramaic loanword (*TDOT* 4:280–282).

rather a polemic against those who would adduce dreams and visions as support for declarations that run contrary to what has traditionally been perceived as the will of God.¹³⁵

Evidence from Other Jewish Literature

Old Testament Apocrypha

Since the Apocrypha texts are preserved in Greek, Hanson's catalog of dream-vision terminology once again provides the basis for discussion.¹³⁶ On the whole, dream-visions occur somewhat infrequently in the OTA. Of Hanson's terms, there is no significant use of ἀποκάλυψις, ἐπιφάνεια, ὄναρ, ὄπτασία,¹³⁷ or ὄραμα in this material.¹³⁸ It is also interesting to note that the last four terms on Hanson's list (ὄψις,¹³⁹ φαντασία, φάντασμα, and φάσμα) occur only in a peculiar portion of

¹³⁵ As with the non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman material, the positive and negative evidence above has been presented synchronically. It would be interesting to summarize these data diachronically. Unfortunately, however, such a task is difficult because the precise dates of the biblical texts remain unknown. It might be tempting to see a pattern in which dreams and visions were viewed positively in the earliest material of the Hebrew Bible, then viewed with suspicion in the deuteronomistic literature, and finally viewed more positively again in the period following the return from exile. Husser warns against this, however: "The question of dreams, therefore, at first absent from the prophetic polemic—absent even from Deuteronomistic legislation—suddenly appears in Jeremiah, who speaks out against prophets who refer to dreams as a source of their oracles. Without directly challenging this form of inspiration, which had long belonged to the panoply of divinatory techniques, Jeremiah does however sow the seeds of suspicion as regards dreams by contesting the authenticity of *the word* of prophets who use them... . Criticism of dreams is therefore not so radical as is often suggested" (*Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 145).

¹³⁶ See Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1407–1408 (the terms are: ἀποκάλυψις, ἐν-ύπνιον, ἐπιφάνεια, ὄναρ/ὄνειρος, ὄπτασία, ὄραμα, ὄρασις, ὄψις, φαντασία, φάντασμα, φάσμα).

¹³⁷ The word ὄπτασία is used generically to refer to "a sight," or "something visible." It is used only once in a supernatural, theophanic context: Sir 43:16 (καὶ ἐν ὄπτασίᾳ αὐτοῦ σαλευθήσεται ὄρη ἐν θελήματι αὐτοῦ πνεύσεται νότος ["in his appearing, mountains shake; the wind will blow when he wishes"]).

¹³⁸ As noted in the introduction, explicit dream-vision terminology is not the only way one may assess that a text describes a dream-vision experience. Tobit, for example, contains a lengthy interaction between Tobias and the angel, Raphael, yet contains only one explicit reference to a dream-vision. Since this section of the present discussion is concerned with a general overview, however, an examination of texts employing these terms will be sufficient.

¹³⁹ Like ὄπτασία, ὄψις is used in a number of other passages in the OTA to refer to a "sight," "appearance," or "something visible."

the Wisdom of Solomon (17–18). As one might expect, there are both positive and negative evaluations of dream-visions in the OTA material.

2 Macc 15:11–16 describes a dream-vision Judas recounted to encourage his troops: καὶ προσεξηγησάμενος ὄνειρον ἀξιόπιστον ὕπαρ τι πάντα ἠΰφρανεν (“and he cheered all of them, relating a trustworthy dream, a sort of vision”). The language used to describe this dream-vision is rather striking.¹⁴⁰ The use of the adjective ἀξιόπιστος (“trustworthy”) is important. In context, this vision of Jeremiah handing a “holy sword, a gift from God”¹⁴¹ to Judas is certainly regarded as a positive divine portent. As seen above in the discussion of non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature, however, any qualification of a dream (positive or negative) can be taken to indicate a need for such qualification (i.e., that “untrustworthy” dream-visions also occur).¹⁴²

There is a significant concentration of dream-vision terminology in Wisdom 17–18. This section of the text features descriptions of God’s judgment couched in allusions to the Egyptian oppressors of the Israelites. Wisdom of Solomon 17:2 provides the following introduction to this passage: “Supposing that they had dominated the holy nation, they were, in fact, lawless prisoners, incarcerated under their own roofs during the long, dark night—exiles from eternal provision.”¹⁴³ In the description that follows, these “lawless” people are tormented by apparitions and various dream-vision experiences.¹⁴⁴ Although the text suggests that all of this suffering is from a divine source, it is not until 18:19 that one finds a revelatory connection with these nightmarish dream-visions: “For the dreams that troubled them had indicated this

¹⁴⁰ Jonathan A. Goldstein suggests that the ὄνειρος ἀξιόπιστος given to offer encouragement (παράκλησις) may be an allusion to Zech 10:2, in which false dreams and visions give “worthless consolation” (μάταια παρακάλουν). See *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 498.

¹⁴¹ 2 Macc 15:16 (τὴν ἁγίαν ῥομφαίαν δῶρον παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ).

¹⁴² The two words that follow, ὕπαρ τι, are also interesting. The term ὕπαρ is used elsewhere as the opposite of ὄναρ, so that it has come to be regarded as something seen when one is awake (LSJ, s.v. “ὕπαρ”). The combination of these terms here provides support for Hanson’s assertion that distinctions between “sleeping dreams” and “waking visions” are not supported by the way that these terms are used. Goldstein, however, has argued that the apparent contradiction between ὄνειρος and ὕπαρ, combined with somewhat poor textual attestation for ὕπαρ, are enough to read a variant like ὕπερ (*II Maccabees*, 498).

¹⁴³ ὑπείληφότες γὰρ καταδυναστεύειν ἔθνος ἅγιον ἄνομοι δέσμοι σκότους καὶ μακρὰς πεδῆται νυκτὸς κατακλεισθέντες ὁρόφοις φυγάδες τῆς αἰωνίου προνοίας ἔκειντο.

¹⁴⁴ See especially Wis 17:4, 6, 14; and 18:17–19.

ahead of time, in order that they might not die ignorant of the reason for their suffering.”¹⁴⁵ In this case, dreams are described as a powerful revelatory tool of God’s judgment.

The most scathing negative evaluation of dream-visions in the OTA occurs in Sirach. In Sir 34:1–7, one finds a denigration of dream-visions very similar to that discussed above in Ecclesiastes: “Empty and false hopes are for the senseless man, and dreams excite fools. The one who pays attention to dreams is like someone trying to catch shadows or chase the wind.”¹⁴⁶ Sirach’s critique then becomes even more pointed:

Thus, a vision of dreams is the likeness of a face seeing itself. Can anything coming from something unclean be clean? Can anything true come from falsehood? Divination and augury and dreams are worthless, and they appear as in the mind of someone suffering birth pains.¹⁴⁷

This evaluation of dreams as a reflective experience draws quite close to the philosophical suspicions seen in Aristotle.¹⁴⁸ Even in this overwhelmingly negative assessment of dreams, however, the possibility remains open that God may still communicate through this flawed vehicle: “Unless [dreams] are sent from the Most High as a visitation, do not give your heart to them; for dreams have led many astray, and the ones hoping in them have fallen.”¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the author gives no criteria by which his readers might know whether their dreams fall into this exceptional category.

¹⁴⁵ οἱ γὰρ ὄνειροι θορυβήσαντες αὐτοὺς τοῦτο προεμήνυσαν ἵνα μὴ ἀγνοοῦντες δι’ ὃ κακῶς πάσχουσιν ἀπόλονται.

¹⁴⁶ Sir 34:1–2 (κεναὶ ἐλπίδες καὶ ψευδεῖς ἀσύνετ’ ἀνδρεί, καὶ ἐνύπνια ἀναπτεροῦσιν ἄφρονας, ὥς θρασυόμενος σκιᾶς καὶ διώκων ἄνεμον οὕτως ὁ ἐπέχων ἐνυπνίῳ).

¹⁴⁷ Sir 34:3–5 (τοῦτο κατὰ τοῦτου ὅρασις ἐνυπνίων, κατέναντι προσώπου ὁμοίωμα προσώπου, ἀπὸ ἀκαθάρτου τί καθαρισθῆσεται; καὶ ἀπὸ ψευδοῦς τί ἀληθεύσει; μαντεῖα καὶ οἰωνισμοὶ καὶ ἐνύπνια μάταιά ἐστιν, καὶ ὥς ὠδινούσης φαντάζεται καρδιά).

¹⁴⁸ Di Lella’s comments on this passage are misleading. Following Box and Oesterley, Di Lella regards Ben Sira as being ahead of his time, displaying “psychological insight that is remarkably modern” (*The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes / by Patrick Skehan; Introduction, and Commentary by Alexander A. Di Lella* [AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987]), 408–409. These insights may be similar to some modern theories regarding dreams, but they were around long before Ben Sira.

¹⁴⁹ Sir 34:6–7 (ἐὰν μὴ παρὰ ὑψίστου ἀποσταλῇ ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ μὴ δῶς εἰς αὐτὰ τὴν καρδίαν σου πολλοὺς γὰρ ἐπλάνησεν τὰ ἐνύπνια καὶ ἐξέπεσον ἐλπίζοντες ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς). The few other positive assessments of dream-visions in Sirach are made in relation to biblical prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel (Sir 48:22 and 49:8, respectively). It is interesting to note Di Lella’s shift from the word “dream” to the word “vision” when he reaches 34:6, even though ἐνύπνιον is used throughout this portion of Sirach (409). (Skehan did the same in his translation of the passage [407].)

Qumran

Not surprisingly, the variety of attitudes toward dream-visions in other Jewish texts is also present in the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the more interesting positive descriptions of dreams as a form of revelation is found in the Genesis Apocryphon. Added to the retelling of Abram's and Sarai's first journey to Egypt (cf. Gen 12:10–20) is an explanation of Abram's fear that he would be killed on account of his wife's beauty. Abram has a dream in which he sees a cedar and a palm tree.¹⁵⁰ Men come to cut down the cedar, but the palm tells the men that both trees have the same root. Because of the palm tree's intervention, both are saved. Abram interprets this dream as a warning that he will be killed and his wife taken. Therefore, he asks Sarai to tell people in this new land that he is her brother.¹⁵¹

As with much of the prophetic literature in the Bible, one finds positive references to prophetic visions in the Scrolls. In 1QM, there is a reference to the “seers of testimonies” (חזוי תעודות), who are described as the Lord's “anointed” (משיחה).¹⁵² The Cairo Damascus document offers a similar assessment: “[God] instructed them by the hand of the ones anointed with his Holy Spirit, and by the seers of truth.”¹⁵³

As with many of the passages discussed above, negative evaluations of dream-visions at Qumran often occur in condemnations of false prophets. Column 12 of the Hodayot (1QH^a) refers to both “seers of deceit” (חזוי רמיה) and “seers of confusion” (חזוי תעות).¹⁵⁴ There are also passages referring to the enigmatic nature of visions. 4Q300 suggests that one may see a vision, but not be able to understand the wisdom it reveals.¹⁵⁵ This resonates with texts like 1QpHab 7.1–16—texts asserting that the fullness of interpretation may not have been given to the biblical prophets themselves, but to the Righteous Teacher.

¹⁵⁰ 1QapGen 19.14–19.

¹⁵¹ Marianne Gevirtz provides an interesting discussion of this dream that has been added to the Abraham story in this tradition (“Abram's Dream in the Genesis Apocryphon: Its Motifs and Their Function,” *Maarav* 8 [1992]: 229–243).

¹⁵² 1QM 11.7–8.

¹⁵³ CD 2.12–13.

¹⁵⁴ 12.10 and 12.20.

¹⁵⁵ 4Q300 frag. 1 2.1–6.

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

The texts of the *OTP* offer a number of challenges to the general overview attempted here. Dream-visions as revelations from God are both fundamental and definitive for most, if not all, of the apocalyptic texts. In many cases, however, the visionary experience is far too lengthy to be treated adequately in this brief overview. On another front, the discussion thus far has centered on terminology (Greek and Hebrew). Many of the Pseudepigrapha have survived in languages that fall outside the range of this discussion (e.g., the Ethiopic text of *1 Enoch*). Finally, because of the speculative nature of dating these texts, it is often difficult to know whether they are even located in the chronological “background” of Luke-Acts. Even more difficult is any assessment that Luke would be familiar with them.¹⁵⁶ The discussion that follows, therefore, is simply intended to show that the spectrum of positive and negative evaluations of dream-visions found in other Jewish texts obtains in the *OTP* as well.

In addition to the apocalyptic material, one also finds positive evaluations of dream-visions in other texts. In the *Testament of Abraham*, God sends the archangel Michael to warn Abraham of his impending demise. Michael is so impressed with Abraham’s righteousness that he cannot announce his death.¹⁵⁷ God makes a compromise: “I shall send my holy spirit upon his son, Isaac, and I shall thrust the mention of his death into Isaac’s heart, so that he will see his father’s death in a dream. Then Isaac will relate the vision, you will interpret it, and he himself will come to know his end.”¹⁵⁸ God, rather than the angel, becomes the direct source of Isaac’s ὄραμα forewarning his father’s death.

It is interesting that one finds an example of negative evaluations of dreams in the Enochic material, a text that comprises so much apocalyptic language: “(And those) who worship stones, and those who carve images ... they shall get no manner of help in them. They shall become wicked on account of the folly of their hearts; their eyes will be blindfolded on account of the fear of their hearts, the visions of their dreams.”¹⁵⁹ This association between false dream-visions and idol

¹⁵⁶ According to Denis’s Greek concordance of the Pseudepigrapha, Luke’s preferred term ὄραμα occurs only nine times (three of which are in the *T. Ab.* passage discussed below).

¹⁵⁷ *T. Ab.* 4:6.

¹⁵⁸ *T. Ab.* 4:7–8; trans. E.P. Sanders (*OTP*, 1:884).

¹⁵⁹ *1 En.* 99:7–8; trans. E. Isaac (*OTP*, 1:80).

worship is reminiscent of similar connections drawn in texts like Deut 13 and Jer 23. Rather than a general and philosophical denigration of dream-visions, such as that found in Eccl 5 and Sir 34, this text suggests that false dream-visions have blinded people into the worship of false gods.

Philo

Philo's most extensive treatment of the subject of dreams is found in *De Somniis*. An adequate summary is provided by the title assigned to this work: *Quod a Deo Mittantur Somnia* (*That Dreams are Sent from God*). Philo argues that dreams, for the most part, are sent from God. In Book 1 of this text, he discusses the nature of dreams using the vision of Jacob at Bethel as a model. Philo regards the ascending and descending angels in this text as the "words" of God. Because mortals require speech as a mediator and intercessor (being unable to endure direct communication from God), they require these ascending and descending "words" of God.¹⁶⁰

In Book 2, Philo summarizes three different types of dream. In the first category are dreams said to come directly from God.¹⁶¹ These are typically clear, concise, and oracular. The second category of dreams are those that occur "when our mind is set in motion by the Soul of the whole (universe), and filled with a divinely inspired frenzy, in which instance it is given to foresee many of the things that will come to pass."¹⁶² "Jacob's Ladder" falls into this category of dream, which is still a revelation from God, albeit through intermediaries. The third and final category is more open to question. In this category are dreams that occur when "the soul puts itself in motion and gives itself over to frenzy."¹⁶³ Dreams in this last category may come from God, and they may not. Of those which do not, Philo specifically mentions those dreams in which Joseph sees himself as superior to his parents and brothers.¹⁶⁴ Generally, Philo's allegorical discussion of dreams significantly expands and elaborates the biblical dream texts, and his opinion of dreams is largely positive.

¹⁶⁰ 1.22.142.

¹⁶¹ Literally, those which are "set in motion by God" (2.1.2).

¹⁶² 2.1.2.

¹⁶³ 2.1.1.

¹⁶⁴ See especially the comment at 2.23.155. Joseph is a problematic figure for Philo. Despite treating this biblical figure positively in his *De Iosepho*, Philo tends to rail against

Josephus

Unlike Philo, Josephus does not devote a lengthy discourse to the topic of dream-visions; his opinions must be gleaned from the numerous dream-visions mentioned in his various writings. The present discussion of dream-visions in Josephus is informed by the extensive study of Robert K. Gnuse.¹⁶⁵ On the whole, dream-visions are portrayed very positively in Josephus.¹⁶⁶ Josephus describes his own decision to lead Jews in battle as the result of a dream he had at Asochis.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, the end of his military career is depicted against the backdrop of dreams. While hiding, and when about to collaborate in a final act of defiance (mass suicide), Josephus “remembered dreams” that he now understood as messages meant to encourage his surrender to the Romans.¹⁶⁸ It was not only his own dreams that Josephus considered significant: he even adds dream-vision language to OT passages that refer more periphrastically to revelation from God.¹⁶⁹ Josephus also passes over OT passages like Jer 23, in which dreams are evaluated negatively.¹⁷⁰ In both Philo and Josephus, therefore, one finds a predominantly positive evaluation of the dream-vision phenomenon.¹⁷¹

Joseph elsewhere as one “who follows in the train of the body and bodily things” (*Deus* 120; trans. F.H. Colson). It is no surprise, therefore, that Philo must be able to exclude these vainglorious dreams from his argument about the divine origin of most dreams.

¹⁶⁵ Robert K. Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradition-Historical Analysis* (AGJU 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Gnuse argues that dreams and dream interpretation are an important facet of Josephus’ self-identity (*Dreams and Dream Reports*, 2). In addition to the other important events discussed here, Gnuse argues that Josephus understood himself as a prophet, and that dream interpretation played a significant role in that self-understanding (*ibid.*, 21–33).

¹⁶⁷ Josephus, *Vita* 208–210; Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 7.

¹⁶⁸ Josephus, *B. J.* 3.351–354; Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Note the descriptions of Amram (*Ant.* 2.212), Judes (*Ant.* 5.192–193), Gideon (*Ant.* 5.215), Nathan (*Ant.* 7.147), and Samuel (*Ant.* 6.38); see Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 11.

¹⁷⁰ Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports*, 11.

¹⁷¹ Although the Tannaitic period is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is interesting to note that Solomon Zeitlin adduces evidence both for positive (*Ma’as. Š.*) and negative (*Ber.* 55) evaluations of dreams (חלומות) in the Talmud (“Dreams and Their Interpretation from the Biblical Period to the Tannaitic Time: An Historical Study,” *JQR* 66 [1976]: 15–16).

Comparison of non-Jewish and Jewish Perspectives

Generally, the evidence from both non-Jewish and Jewish sources examined above reveals similar attitudes toward dream-visions. In both corpora there are positive and negative evaluations of the dream-vision as a reliable medium of revelation. It will be helpful at this point to summarize some important similarities and differences.

There is ample proof that dream-visions were often viewed positively as a source of revelation. There is a sense in which this general perception is demonstrated by the amount of available evidence: if dream-visions were not viewed positively by many, they would not be discussed in much of the literature surveyed above. In terms of positive evaluation, the primary difference between Jewish and non-Jewish evidence is the presumed source of the dream-vision. Those Jewish texts that treat dream-visions positively assume they are communication from God. Many of the positive assessments of dream-visions in non-Jewish material also attribute them to a divinity. In some other cases, like that of the Stoics, dream-visions are reliable because of a more philosophical understanding of a *sympatheia* between the individual and the divine Soul. What is important for the present discussion is that all of the positive assessments of dream-visions rely on the belief that dream-visions come somehow from something outside the individual.

More significant differences are found in the negative evaluations of dream-visions. The suspicion of dream-visions in non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature falls into two general categories. Some texts exhibit the view that dreams can be deceptive because of their source: the dreams themselves are deceptive, or the gods sending them wish to deceive the recipient.¹⁷² Other texts argue against the legitimacy of dream-visions as a source of revelation on scientific or philosophical grounds.¹⁷³ In these sources, dream-visions are explained as a physiological or psychosomatic phenomenon. Still others mention the deceptive nature of dreams only briefly, without explaining the source of the recipients' suspicion.¹⁷⁴

The Jewish texts surveyed above differ from the non-Jewish material on this point. The dismissal of dreams as a psychosomatic experience

¹⁷² See the passages in Homer, *Il.* 2 and *Od.* 19 discussed above.

¹⁷³ See the discussion of Herodotus (*Hist.* 7), Aristotle (*On Prophecy in Sleep*), and Cicero (*Div.*) above.

¹⁷⁴ See Chariton (*Chaer.* 3.7) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.* 7).

occurs only rarely (Isa 29:8; Eccl 5:2; and Sir 34:1–5).¹⁷⁵ The other passages that question the reliability of dream-visions are more properly understood as warnings against false prophecy. They do not question the legitimacy of dream-visions *per se*, but instead question the content of certain prophetic messages. With the exception of the story of the “lying spirit” sent by God to the false prophets of King Jehoshaphat,¹⁷⁶ there is no conception of deceptive dream-visions or deceptive dream-sending deities in the Jewish material surveyed here.¹⁷⁷ These points are of particular importance for understanding the way that characters respond to dream-visions in Jewish Scripture.

In the non-Jewish Graeco-Roman material discussed above, individuals often dispute the validity of their dream-visions. This disputation, however, stems from a more general suspicion of dream-visions as a reliable form of divine revelation. What is so interesting about the Jewish texts is that the characters often dispute the message of their dream-vision *even though they recognize the divine origin of this communication*. In Gen 15, for example, Abram questions God’s promise because he is still childless. In Gen 18, he argues with God about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The ease with which Abram disputes God’s assertions will be especially important for understanding the dream-visions in Luke-Acts.

Importance for the Study of Dream-Visions in Luke-Acts

The point of this discussion has been to provide background information for an examination of dream-visions in Luke-Acts. It is necessary to ask, therefore, how the use of dream-visions in Jewish and non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature may have influenced the author of Luke-Acts. Although a more thorough examination of specific examples must be delayed until chapters 4 and 5, a few points of comparison may be noted here at the outset.

In Luke-Acts, there is no reflective evaluation of dream-visions. Indeed, connections between the examples in Luke-Acts and the specifi-

¹⁷⁵ As noted above, even Sirach permits the possibility that dreams *might* come from God in some cases (Sir 34:6).

¹⁷⁶ 1 Kgs 22:19–23.

¹⁷⁷ This is not to ignore texts like Exod 9:12 (“the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh”). It is important to notice, however, that the rather widespread suspicion of dreams in Greek culture is not found in Jewish Scripture.

cally Graeco-Roman suspicion of dream-visions will be few and arguable.¹⁷⁸ There is more concrete evidence that Luke was influenced by Jewish Scripture, and especially by material from the Pentateuch. In Luke 1:18, part of the passage describing Zechariah's temple vision, Zechariah asks Gabriel, "How will I know this?" This phrase, *κατὰ τί γνώσομαι τοῦτο*, is a rather unusual Greek expression. It is so unusual, in fact, that it occurs nowhere else in the corpus of Greek literature except at Gen 15:8.¹⁷⁹ As surely as one can know anything about Luke's source material, one can know that he is alluding to this passage in Genesis. Other dream-vision passages in Luke-Acts hint at the influence of Jewish Scripture as well.¹⁸⁰

Conclusions and Cautions

The diversity of perspectives in the background material examined here urges caution. Opinions regarding the reliability of dream-visions as a reliable medium of revelation in antiquity abound. Generalizations, therefore, are unhelpful. Each piece of evidence must be evaluated individually. Furthermore, each piece of evidence should be examined with the diversity of ancient attitudes in mind. This is especially true of a text like Luke-Acts that does not contain a theoretical discussion of the nature of dream-visions. With these texts, one must be sensitive to the narrative description of the dream-visions themselves, and to the characters' reaction to these experiences. The dream-visions in Luke-Acts are interesting not only for the various forms they take, but also for the way that characters respond to them as they struggle to perceive God's will in the context of visionary experience. This background study will be especially pertinent for the discussion of the Spirit's guidance in Acts 19–21 (chapter 5). Knowing that the ancients often viewed dream-visions with uncertainty will help to illumine texts in which different characters offer contradictory interpretations of the Spirit's guidance.

¹⁷⁸ See the discussion Acts 10:17 in chapter 5.

¹⁷⁹ This is according to the latest version of the *TLG*. The phrase is quoted in patristic material. By "nowhere else," I mean the phrase occurs only in Gen 15:8, Luke 1:18, and texts referring to one of these two passages.

¹⁸⁰ See the discussion of Peter's vision in Acts 10:11–16 and the connections with Ezek 4:14 in chapter 5 below.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

The previous chapter established a historical background against which one may read the dream-visions in Luke-Acts. Before embarking on a discussion of Paul's vision at Troas, or of the broader relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts, it will be helpful to see what scholars have written on these topics. The present chapter, therefore, will review scholarship in two categories. The first section will offer a survey of scholarly commentary on Acts 16:6–10. The second will treat studies that have examined Luke's use of dream-visions. The material in both sections will be presented in roughly chronological order.

Interpretation of Acts 16:6–10

As one might expect, the interpretations of this passage in the history of scholarship often reflect the more general exegetical climate of the time. Some of the early material reflects the ongoing debate in the 19th century over the historicity of Acts. Likewise, the later studies reflect the changing concerns marked by the turn towards literary criticism. Aside from discussions of the “we” passages, there have been remarkably few article-length studies of Acts 16:6–10. The segments that follow, therefore, are culled mostly from commentaries and passing references in prominent works on Acts.

Before discussing these studies, it may be helpful to reiterate the place of this discussion in the larger agenda of the present examination. In the Troas passage, one finds the only dream-vision in Luke-Acts that does *not* feature a divine intermediary. Nevertheless, the characters in Luke's story automatically interpret Paul's dream-vision at Troas as a message from God. In chapter three I will argue that this character-filtered interpretation is strangely at odds with the narrative that follows. As a way of setting the context for that discussion, I will be concerned here especially with the way that modern interpreters understand the characters' reaction to Paul's dream-vision.

Pre-Critical Period

Calvin

Despite coming from the so-called “pre-critical” period, Calvin’s discussion of the Troas episode is an interesting place to begin this examination.¹ This treatment is not meant to favor one Reformation figure over others, but simply to note some significant observations that were not maintained in the subsequent scholarship of Acts. Of the many scholars to comment on Acts in the past half-millennium, Calvin was one of the few who noticed some rather strange elements in 16:6–10. Like many after him, Calvin assumed the divine origin of Paul’s vision at Troas.² His unique contribution can be found in the way he follows up on this part of the narrative. Where so many others will simply note the importance of 16:6–10 for the beginning of Paul’s mission to “Europe,” Calvin observes:

This story shows, as if in a mirror, how sharply the Lord exercised the faith and patience of His men, presenting arduous difficulties, which only extraordinary steadfastness could be a match to overcoming. For Paul’s introduction to Macedonia is described as such as could have taken away confidence in the vision. Abandoning the work that they had in hand, the holy men quickly cross the sea, as if the whole Macedonian nation was going to come and meet them, eager to ask for help. Now the outcome corresponds to their expectation so little that nearly all doors are closed for them to speak... . Therefore they are forced to go out into the open country, to speak in an unfrequented and out-of-the-way spot. There they cannot meet even with a single man, to listen to their teaching. They only obtain one woman as a disciple of Christ, and a foreigner at that. Who would not have said that this journey had been undertaken foolishly, and most inauspiciously, when it was turning out to be so unfruitful?³

Despite having every reason to be discouraged, Paul must take encouragement from the faith of his one convert, Lydia.⁴ Calvin was right.

¹ John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 14–28 (trans. John W. Fraser; London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966).

² “The Lord did not wish Paul to put off any more time in Asia, because His purpose was to bring him to Macedonia. But Luke describes the way he was led there, that *a man of Macedonia* appeared to him by night. We must observe from that that the Lord does not always keep to the same method of revelation, because different kinds are better suited for confirmation” (Calvin, *Acts* 14–28, 69).

³ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

Paul's trip to Macedonia seems anticlimactic following the tension expressed in Acts 16:6–10. Strangely, more recent commentators have missed this important insight.

19th Century Scholarship

Neander and Zeller

Two scholars who discussed Acts 16:6–10 in a way that typified the “historicity” debates of the 19th century are Augustus Neander and Eduard Zeller. Neander was very willing to elaborate on the text, providing psychological motivations for character actions. He was also willing to accept supernatural elements of the story as historical. His comments on Acts 16:6–10 indicate both tendencies:

On leaving Galatia, Paul was at first uncertain in what direction to turn. ... he thought of going in a south-westerly direction. ... but either by an inward voice or a vision he received a monition from the Divine Spirit, which caused him to abandon both these plans. Having formed an intention of passing over to Europe, but waiting to see whether he should be withheld or encouraged by a higher guidance, he betook himself to Troas; and a nocturnal vision, in which a Macedonian appeared calling in behalf of his nation for aid, confirmed his resolution to visit Macedonia.⁵

Zeller contends against Neander's psychological defense of this material, and asserts instead that such experiences are simply not verifiable historically: “We are not entitled positively to declare the vision which induced him to do so (xvi. 9) to be unhistorical, but neither can the possibility be denied that it may be so.”⁶ For both scholars, the key question about this text is whether the Troas vision can be taken as a historical event.

⁵ Augustus Neander, *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles, Vol. 1* (trans. J.E. Ryland; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), 174–175.

⁶ Eduard Zeller, *The Contents and Origin of the Acts of the Apostles, Critically Investigated* (2 vols.; trans. Joseph Dare; London: Williams & Norgate, 1875–1876), 2:43. Although Zeller does not explicitly argue against Neander in this portion of his discussion, he elsewhere opposes Neander's attempt to correlate both miraculous and natural causes within the same event. In his treatment of the Cornelius–Peter visions in Acts 10, for example, Zeller states: “The work of explaining these miracles by natural means has this time, as in so many other cases, been undertaken by Neander (*History of the Planting and Training*, 118ff.), although, as his custom is, vaguely, and in such a manner that a place is reserved for the miracle as well as for the natural causes” (*Contents*, 1:272).

Given the climate of biblical studies in the latter 19th century, it is not surprising that a passage like Acts 16:6–10 received little attention. As comparative studies gained popularity, however, scholars began noticing visionary passages in other texts from the Graeco-Roman era.

Religionsgeschichtliche Schule

Wikenhauser

By far, the best example of religionsgeschichtliche scholarship on Paul's vision at Troas is found in the work of Alfred Wikenhauser. In his article, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen zu Apg 16, 9," Wikenhauser explores a number of "parallels" to Paul's visionary experience at Troas.⁷ Although he would later go on to produce a broader study of dreams and visions throughout the NT,⁸ it is significant that he started with the Troas vision. With their emphasis on angels, the Lord, and the Holy Spirit, most of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts resemble more closely those in the OT and other Jewish texts. The Troas vision, because it never mentions God, the Spirit, or any other divine agent, more closely resembles visions in non-Jewish Graeco-Roman texts.⁹ Thus, the Troas vision is open to a broader spectrum of comparison on a history of religions model.

Wikenhauser compares Luke's description of Paul's vision to those attributed to a number of key historical figures. He discusses the visionary impetus of Alexander described by Josephus (*Ant.* 11.322–339), and also the apparition that compelled Julius Caesar to cross the Rubicon (Suetonius, *Jul.* 32).¹⁰ It is interesting that Wikenhauser likens Paul's

⁷ Alfred Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen zu Apg. 16, 9," *BZ* 23 (1935–1936): 180–186. Although Wikenhauser is here engaged in a more extensive comparative study than had been attempted previously, he does note some parallels observed by others (e.g., Richard Reitzenstein's study, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen* [Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1906]).

⁸ Alfred Wikenhauser, "Die Traumgeschichte des Neuen Testaments in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht," in *Pisciculi: Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums: Franz Joseph Dölger zum sechzigsten Geburtstag dargeboten von Freunden, Verehrern und Schülern* (ed. T. Klauser and A. Rucker; Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband 1; Münster: Aschendorf, 1939), 320–333. This article will be discussed in the latter half of this chapter.

⁹ Although it is tempting to draw a geographical connection here (a "Greek" vision compels Paul in the direction of Greece), such a connection is largely anachronistic given the Hellenized nature of Asia Minor and the Near East in the first century.

¹⁰ Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen," 181 and 183. Josephus de-

vision to those of world leaders. Despite the fact that dreams and visions are prevalent in ancient literature,¹¹ Wikenhauser chooses to focus on examples of prominent figures. The visions themselves are somewhat similar, but Wikenhauser draws much more elaborate conclusions. He likens Paul to Alexander and Caesar, and Paul's vision and its result to those of Alexander and Caesar.¹² In this analysis, Paul's crossing into Macedonia takes on the monumental importance of Alexander's conquest of the East and Caesar's decision to claim power in Rome:

Die mitgeteilten Parallelen bringen uns vor allem zum Bewußtein, welch ein bedeutsamer Abschnitt in der Missionstätigkeit des Apostels mit seinem Übergang nach Mazedonien und damit nach Europa beginnt. Wie Alexander, Cäsar ... wird Paulus durch jenes Traumgesicht zu einem tief in seine missionarische Tätigkeit eingreifenden Unternehmen gerufen.¹³

Wikenhauser, like so many scholars after him, viewed Paul's crossing as important because it marks the extension of Paul's mission to "Europe"—a somewhat anachronistic association.¹⁴ Wikenhauser's work has been influential for a number of later scholars.

scribes the double dream-vision of Jaddus the high priest and Alexander the Great. Jaddus is told by God in a dream that he should present himself and the people to Alexander in white robes. When Alexander sees this spectacle, he kneels before Jaddus. Asked why he has done this, Alexander explains that he saw just such a spectacle in a dream at Dios—a dream that encouraged him to cross over to Asia without delay.

Suetonius relates the story that Julius Caesar, wondering whether to cross the Rubicon, saw a vision of a fair figure playing music. When Caesar's soldiers begin to gather around this figure, the figure grabbed a trumpet from one of the soldiers, sounded a war blast, and went to the far bank of the river. Taking this as a sign from the gods, Caesar exhorted himself and his troops to follow in the path of the visionary figure.

¹¹ Even in histories, dreams and visions appear to common folk as well; see the dream of the farmer Titus Latinius in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.68.

¹² The influence of this idea has been far reaching. Richard Pervo endorses this interpretation in his analysis. More recently, Wikenhauser's hypothesis has been incorporated into Jeffrey Staley's postcolonial interpretation of Acts 16:6–40 ("Changing Woman: Postcolonial Reflections on Acts 16:6–40" *JST* 73 [1999], 123). Staley, however, receives the theory indirectly from Pervo and Talbert.

¹³ Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen," 186.

¹⁴ As Jacob Jervell has rightly pointed out, "Dass die Mission jetzt nach Europa kommt, wird bei Lukas gar nicht besonders vermerkt, denn es geht ja ohnehin um das römischen Imperium, und Kleinasien ist kaum weniger hellenistisch als Griechenland" (*Die Apostelgeschichte: Übersetzt und erklärt* [KEK 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 417).

The association between Paul's missionary trip to Macedonia and "Christianity entering Europe" is important for the postcolonial interpretation of Jeffrey Staley. Not-

Mid-20th Century Acts Scholarship

Henry J. Cadbury

For Cadbury, much of the miraculous activity in Luke-Acts is related to Luke's sense of the plan and purpose of God. Divine intervention in the form of miracles is "more than mere divine credential for use at the moment."¹⁵ Instead, this miraculous activity "looks forward to a future destiny."¹⁶ Such a sense of destiny is clear in the miraculous nature of the births of John and Jesus, for example. Cadbury acknowledges, however, that some miraculous events in the story do fall into the category of "immediate guidance." Paul's vision at Troas provides an example of this latter category: "The most striking passage is the account of Paul's baffled and tentative journey that leads him out of Asia Minor into Europe—striking for its negative elements and for its variety of expressions for the guide in so few verses (holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus, vision, God)."¹⁷

ing a number of later scholars that have equated Paul's mission to Macedonia as a mission to Europe, Staley also observes the caution voiced against this equation by Rackham as early as 1906 ("Changing Woman," 114 n. 2). There is ancient evidence that Greeks regarded their territory as a part of a broad division of the world called "Europa" (Herodotus 4.45 ["Changing Woman," 114 n. 3]). As Staley observes, however, there is no evidence in Acts to suggest that this distinction is intended by Luke (115). More important for Staley is the way that this biblical text was used by modern Christians as a proof-text for colonial missionary activity (115).

Moving in a different direction, Loveday Alexander makes the provocative suggestion that Luke creates a "mental map" for the reader in the list of places mentioned in Acts 2:9–11—a map from which Macedonia and Achaia are strangely missing ("In Journeyings Often": Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance," in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* [ed. C.M. Tuckett; JSNTSup 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 30–31). For Alexander, therefore, the move to Macedonia hardly signals the expansion of the mission to "Europe." On the contrary, the omission of Macedonia and Achaia from the "mental map" in Acts 2 is striking for the opposite reason: it "allows Luke to present these areas as virgin territory unreached by the gospel... . Paul's ... crossing of the Bosphorus marks a breaking out of the known world, a new step carefully signaled in the narrative by a series of false moves successively blocked by the Spirit (16.6–8). It is hardly surprising that the decisive move requires the explicit guidance of a dream (16.9–10)" (31).

¹⁵ Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (2nd ed., 1958; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 305.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Martin Dibelius

Although Martin Dibelius did not treat Acts 16:6–10 extensively in his classic *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, he did make certain “style-critical” assertions about the passage consistently through these collected essays. In the handful of passages where this text is cited,¹⁸ Dibelius operates with two connected assumptions. First, Paul’s excursion to Macedonia is divinely guided. More important, Paul’s “divine” call to Macedonia is the same thing as a “divine” call to Greece. His description in “Paul on the Areopagus” is indicative:

[Luke] knew from those accounts of the journeys that, as we are told in 1 Thess 3:1, when making his first journey to Greece, Paul had actually been in Athens, but this journey to Greece was, in Luke’s eyes, an event affecting the entire world. His whole handling of the account in Acts 16:6–10 aims at emphasizing how divine providence was instrumental in causing this journey to take place: the journey was not planned—Paul was compelled to make it, by the leading of the Spirit and by a nocturnal vision. Undoubtedly Luke, who participated to some extent in the Greek world of culture, realised the importance of the event which occurred as the Christian apostle entered Greece. Paul’s appearance in Athens is, for the author, the focal point of this great event in the history of evangelism and religion.¹⁹

Dibelius argues the following logical progression in Luke’s thought: Paul is divinely guided to Macedonia, which means he was divinely guided to Greece, and this is the beginning of the spread of the gospel to “the entire world.”

Ernst Haenchen

After offering a review of scholarship on the question of the “we” passages, Haenchen passes quickly over the episode at Troas. What he does say about it is both brief and telling: “This reminds us of the story of Cornelius. By the way in which Luke developed it, it was made clear to the reader that the Christian mission to the Gentiles did not originate in any human desire but solely in the divine resolution.”²⁰

¹⁸ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Mary Ling and Paul Schubert; London: SCM Press, 1956; repr. Mifflintown, Pa.: Sigler Press, 1999), 76, 129–130, 149, and 210.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁰ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 485.

Haenchen's reference to the Cornelius story recalls his caustic comments regarding that episode:

Here stands revealed a peculiarity of Lucan theology which can scarcely be claimed as a point in its favour: in endeavoring to make the hand of God visible in the history of the Church, Luke virtually excludes all human decision. Instead of the realization of the divine will *in* human decisions, *through* human decisions, he shows us a series of supernatural interventions in the dealings of men... . As Luke presents them, these divine incursions have such compelling force that all doubt in the face of them *must* be stilled. They compellingly prove that God, not man, is at work... . But here faith loses its true character of decision, and the obedience from faith which Luke would have liked to portray turns into something utterly different: very nearly the twitching of human puppets.²¹

Haenchen's assessment leaves no room in Luke's narrative for human participation in the events described.

Hans Conzelmann

Conzelmann's comments on the Troas passage are circumspect, but interesting. About Acts 16:9, he says only: "Revelations that occur in dreams are well known in the Old Testament and in the whole of the ancient world."²² He then concludes his discussion of 16:6–10 with a brief evaluation of the "we" problem. Conzelmann mentions nothing about the characters' conclusion that Paul's *ὄραμα* constituted a divine directive to go to Macedonia, or about the lack of an explicit divine agent in this *ὄραμα*. His first remarks in the next section, however, seem to betray some concern: "The fact that the trip goes so well is a confirmation of the *ὄραμα*, 'vision.' The distance from Troas to Neapolis ... is two hundred kilometers by air. Favorable winds made it possible to cover the distance in the time indicated."²³ Since divine agency is not explicit in Paul's dream-vision, "favorable winds" become a "confirmation" that this vision is from God.

²¹ Ibid., 362.

²² Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 127. As evidence for this claim, Conzelmann offers Herodotus 7.12 and Philostratus *Vita Apoll.* 4.34.

²³ Ibid., 129.

Later 20th Century Commentators

Richard I. Pervo

Pervo's discussion of the Troas episode in *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* reflects the earlier work of Wikenhauser and Haenchen.²⁴ Essentially, Pervo accepts and reiterates the salient features of Wikenhauser's argument, offering conclusions that are more forceful than Wikenhauser's. After describing the vision at Troas and comparing it with visions of Alexander, Caesar, and Apollonius,²⁵ Pervo concludes: "This is an elegant literary introduction to a climactic moment. Through it Luke indicates the importance of what is about to take place (and raises Paul to the level of Alexander)."²⁶ In the discussion that follows, Pervo cites the quotation of Haenchen given above and offers his own denigration of the theological perspective engendered by Luke's use of dream-visions: "Such unabashedly concrete and unreflective theology fully deserves the label 'popular'. Culturally, it is thoroughly compatible with the naïve idealism that emerges in sentimental fiction."²⁷ Although Pervo offers little, if anything, new on this passage, his adherence to earlier scholarship provides an interesting point of contrast to some of the scholars discussed below.

Robert C. Tannehill

In his treatment of the Cornelius–Peter episode in Acts 10–11, Tannehill argues against the one-sided conclusions of both Haenchen and Pervo: "Even though the story of Peter and Cornelius has characteristics that may impress modern people as naïve, we will see that it is considerably more subtle in tracing the process of discerning the divine will than Haenchen recognizes."²⁸ Tannehill maintains that this process of discernment is present in the Troas episode as well: "Once again the narrator shows keen interest in the dialogue between human purpose and divine purpose, indicating that Jesus' witnesses, too, must patiently endure the frustration of their own plans in order to discover the oppor-

²⁴ Richard Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

²⁵ Pervo, *Profit*, 73; cf. Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen," 180–183.

²⁶ Pervo, *Profit*, 73; cf. Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen," 186.

²⁷ Pervo, *Profit*, 74.

²⁸ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:128 (Pervo is mentioned in n. 1).

tunity that God holds open.”²⁹ Tannehill’s examination is more sensitive to the narrative contours of the text,³⁰ and he is therefore able to observe the human element in both of these vision stories. Like other commentators, however, Tannehill still assumes that Paul’s dream offers a divine directive. Nevertheless, Tannehill’s repeated emphasis on the human element of Luke’s story will serve as an important point of departure in much of the present analysis.

Luke Timothy Johnson

Citing the often quoted parallel in Philostratus (*Ap. Ty.* 4.34), Johnson notes that the vision at Troas, like those in the stories of Paul’s conversion and that of Cornelius, “plays a key role in advancing the plot.”³¹ He also observes the importance of *συμβάλλω* in v. 10, suggesting that it be translated here “reaching the conclusion.”³² Johnson’s comments, however, do not extend far beyond these observations. Like most commentators, he assumes the divine origin of the Paul’s vision.³³

Although the discussion of the Troas passage in Johnson’s commentary is brief, some of his earlier work provides helpful insights. In his popular 1983 volume, *Decision Making in the Church*, Johnson provides a close reading of the interplay between divine revelation and human perception in the Cornelius–Peter episode.³⁴ Approaching the text very differently from Haenchen, Johnson notes the role of human doubt, interpretation, and decision in the Acts account of the inclusion of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁰ Tannehill’s is certainly not the first narrative-critical reading of Acts. He notes his indebtedness to Luke Timothy Johnson’s *Decision Making in the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), and the readings of Acts 10–11 contained therein (*Narrative Unity*, 128 n. 2). Beverly Roberts Gaventa has also observed the role of the characters in this particular story: “By means of the issue of *hospitality*, Luke demonstrates that the conversion of the first Gentile required the conversion of the church as well. Indeed, in Luke’s account, Peter and company undergo a change that is more wrenching by far than the change experienced by Cornelius” (*From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 109). I will discuss both Johnson and Gaventa in the chronological order in which their larger commentaries were published.

³¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 286.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “[Paul] is called by God to a new field of missionary work (16:4–10)” (*Acts*, 287).

³⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Decision Making in the Church: A Biblical Model* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), esp. pp. 67–77.

the Gentiles. Peter's response to his vision in Acts 10 is not immediate acceptance: "Peter not only refuses the order but is thrown into utter confusion by his experience."³⁵ Johnson's emphasis on human doubt and interpretation informs the present investigation significantly.

Edmond Farahian

Farahian's 1993 article, "Paul's Vision at Troas (Acts 16:9–10)," is the first article on this passage since that of Wikenhauser discussed above, and is perhaps the most compelling treatment to date.³⁶ Although, like so many others, Farahian assumes the divine origin of Paul's vision, he provides an interesting discussion of the interplay between human volition and the will of God in this passage:

But it is not enough to recognize the direct dependence of the mission on God. To stop there would be to risk not bringing out the balance between divine will and human freedom. Moreover, while it is important that this theological truth be evidenced and affirmed, it seems to me even more important that we see "how" this will of God is manifested and made known, first of all to the personages involved and then to the reader.³⁷

These comments raise a number of interesting issues. Farahian aptly summarizes the tendency of most scholars to pass over the Troas vision as a convention by which Luke simply shows the divine redirection of Paul's mission. He also raises the more important question of the balance between divine will and human freedom in the passage.³⁸ Finally, he brings in the element of audience: "'how' this will of God is manifested and made known ... to the reader." Farahian points the student interested in this passage in the right direction. An important component—one that most have overlooked—is the reader's understanding of the relationship between Paul's vision and the way that the characters perceive God's will in this manifestation. If the comments summarized in this chapter are any indication, most readers assume that the characters' interpretation of Paul's vision is correct.

³⁵ Johnson, *Decision Making*, 70.

³⁶ Edmond Farahian, "Paul's Vision at Troas (Acts 16:9–10)," in *Luke and Acts* (ed. G. O'Collins and G. Marconi; trans. M. O'Connell; New York: Paulist, 1993), 197–207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁸ Rather than "human freedom," I am concerned with the role of human perception.

Farahian also attempts to understand Paul's dream-vision in the broader context of dream-visions in Luke-Acts. Unfortunately, this portion of his discussion is characterized by some of the common pitfalls one finds in other examinations. Like Wikenhauser and Pervo, Farahian draws a connection between dream-visions and "heroic" figures:

Not only does [ὄραμα] seem to be the characteristic word of the entire book of Acts; in addition, it is easy to see that only *great individuals* have dreams or visions: Moses, Peter, Paul. This association suggests that the recipients are equals and have a like dignity; and in fact the recipients of dreams or visions are the principal personages in the history of salvation.³⁹

This evaluation, of course, ignores the fact that dream-visions appear to some characters in Acts who fall outside of this mold. The best example is Ananias, to whom the Lord spoke ἐν ὀράματι.⁴⁰

Some of Farahian's other conclusions are problematic as well. Attempting to find the balance between divine direction and human freedom, he asserts: "Decisive interventions from on high direct the actions of the principal personages, but not independently of their will. They have been looking for solutions; they have tried various avenues; they have experienced doubt and indecision."⁴¹ This overstates what one finds in the text of Acts. In some cases, the characters have been "trying various avenues." The Troas story is a wonderful example. In other cases, however, "decisive intervention" comes seemingly out of nowhere (e.g., Peter's vision in Acts 10:11–16). In these passages, the characters may doubt (Acts 10:17), but they do so *after* the "decisive intervention" rather than before.

These points of criticism aside, Farahian's contribution to scholarship on this passage is quite significant. His final comments are compelling:

All of the literary devices which I have pointed out, especially dreams or visions, serve to give us a glimpse of the interplay of numerous influences and to preserve a sufficient area of obscurity that lets us sense the *sumergeia* between God and human beings. The narrator is skillful enough that, without ever saying exactly the same thing twice over, he lets us see how their [*sic*] action of God elicits that of human beings in a true symbiosis.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., 204 (emphasis mine).

⁴⁰ See Acts 9:10.

⁴¹ Farahian, "Paul's Vision at Troas," 205.

⁴² Ibid., 207.

C.K. Barrett

Barrett's discussion of Acts 16:6–10 dwells primarily on the geographic descriptions in vv. 6–8 and the problems raised by the introduction of the first plural pronoun in 16:10. His brief treatment of Paul's dream-vision assumes that the experience is a divine directive: "Luke emphasizes that at every stage the travelers receive supernatural guidance. Such guidance is renewed in dramatic form in vv. 9, 10."⁴³ He even deflates the interpretive force of συμβιβάζω ("conclude"): "The conclusion was inevitable. God had called us to evangelize the Macedonians."⁴⁴ For Barrett, Acts 16:9–10 emphasizes divine guidance to the exclusion of any significant interpretation on the part of Paul or "we."

Charles Talbert

Talbert regards Acts 16:6–10 as a commissioning scene parallel to Paul's first commissioning in Acts 13:1–2.⁴⁵ Providing dozens of "parallel" vision stories (including those already mentioned by Wikenhauser),⁴⁶ Talbert draws two extreme conclusions from this passage: "By means of this commissioning story, Luke makes clear that the outreach to Europe is owing not to human desire but *solely to God's intervention*. In what follows, Paul is not so much the apostle of the church of Antioch as he is of Christ himself (26:16–18—'a witness of what you have seen [of me] and what you will be shown')."⁴⁷ Talbert's emphatic language "owing ... solely to God's intervention" stands in stark relief to what one actually finds in the text. The second conclusion, that this vision somehow establishes Paul as an apostle of Christ, rather than of the church at Antioch, is similarly far-reaching.

⁴³ C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 765. In the next chapter I will take up this question of supernatural guidance at "every stage." It will be interesting to note that the second mission of Paul and Barnabas features no such "divine" initiation (Acts 15:36).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 773.

⁴⁵ Charles Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 147.

⁴⁶ As I will point out in the next section with reference to John Sanford and Morton Kelsey, generalizations about dreams and visions in the ancient world can be misleading. Talbert's work provides an example of the unfortunate but pervasive assumption that similarity of form is equal to similarity of function (see also the comments on Wikenhauser above).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 148 (emphasis mine).

F. Scott Spencer

Like that of Tannehill and Johnson, Spencer's approach to Acts is sensitive to the direction of the narrative. For instance, he is one of the only commentators since Calvin to lift up the irony that Paul sees a Macedonian man, but is heard instead by women.⁴⁸ Like other commentators, Spencer assumes a divine agent in Paul's vision: "As we have come to expect, the Holy Spirit continues to plot the missionary agenda of Acts through revelatory visions and other means of divine communication."⁴⁹ Spencer also observes a very human element in this story. He suggests that the human figure (as distinguished from the usual angel or Spirit) "highlights the importance of human receptivity to the gospel in charting the church's mission."⁵⁰ Whereas the present study will emphasize human receptivity and perception on the part of the characters that have visionary experiences, Spencer emphasizes that it is the receptivity of the *Macedonians* that is important: "the church is not an imperial juggernaut steam-rolling its way to the ends of the earth... . Christian missionaries seek out those who most welcome their work."⁵¹ Despite the difference in emphasis, Spencer's comments help illumine the importance of human response to the divine will on both sides of the proclamation of the gospel.

Jacob Jervell

Jervell comments only briefly on this passage, echoing many of the sentiments already noted. He attributes the words of the Macedonian directly to God: "Gott redet hier durch die Vision, V 10b, die vielleicht ein Traumgesicht ist."⁵² It is through God's "intervention" that the Pauline mission is redirected toward Macedonia.⁵³ Indeed, the whole

⁴⁸ F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 164. Spencer says that they are heard by "Macedonian" women (164), but as Calvin and Gaventa have noted, Lydia is *not* Macedonian (Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 14–28, 71; Gaventa, *Acts*, 236).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 417.

⁵³ "Durch Gottes Befehl oder Intervention wird Mazedonien Mittelpunkt der paulinischen Mission" (*Apostelgeschichte*, 417). Given the questions raised in the following chapter of this discussion, Jervell's use of the word "Mittelpunkt" becomes all the more interesting.

point of this story is to highlight the “leadership” of God: “Warum hat Lukas eigentlich von dieser merkwürdigen Reise mit Missionsbehinderungen erzählt? Selbstverständlich will er die Führung Gottes bei der paulinischen Mission aufzeigen.”⁵⁴

Joseph Fitzmyer

Fitzmyer’s comments on this passage also echo many that have been discussed. Like Wikenhauser, Fitzmyer attributes importance to Paul’s shift to Europe.⁵⁵ He also equates the perceived call to Macedonia as a general call to Greece.⁵⁶ Even more than Spencer, Fitzmyer assumes that the references to the Spirit in Acts 16:6–8 are subsequently implied in 16:9–10: “*There Paul had a vision one night*. I.e., a dream, which the context implies was Spirit instilled.”⁵⁷ Fitzmyer even shares Calvin’s pastoral interpretation of this episode: “The Lucan Paul thus gives the readers of Acts a view of how the Christian disciple must patiently await heaven’s instructions.”⁵⁸

Beverly Roberts Gaventa

For Gaventa, the Troas episode depicts a rather sharp contrast between God’s will and the will of other characters in Luke-Acts.⁵⁹ In Acts 16:6–7, the will of the characters is described in their frustrated attempts to enter certain areas and preach. Divine opposition to these plans is explicit: the Holy Spirit hinders them from speaking the word in Asia in v. 6; the Spirit of Jesus does not permit them to enter Bithynia in v. 7. Gaventa maintains that “these prohibitions of human plans enhance the commission of vv. 9–10... . These prohibitions serve to reinforce one of Luke’s major themes, that God and God alone directs this mission.”⁶⁰ Although the present study concurs with the idea that the prohibitions of the Spirit enhance Luke’s narrative, it also suggests that it is important to observe the role that the characters play in directing the mission based on their perception of God’s will.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 418.

⁵⁵ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 577.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 577–578. Note the similarity to Dibelius.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 579.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 578.

⁵⁹ Gaventa, *Acts*, 235.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 234–235.

Summary

There are a number of important features in the scholarship surveyed above. One peculiar element of Wikenhauser's religionsgeschichtliche study is the perceived similarity between Paul's dream-vision at Troas and the visionary experiences of political and military leaders of the Graeco-Roman world. Scholars like Pervo and Talbert have maintained this connection. As will become clear in chapters 4 and 5, such assumptions obscure the understanding of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, a text in which major and minor characters alike experience visionary encounters.

Another oddity of scholarship on this passage is the anachronistic conclusion that Paul's dream-vision at Troas marks the important redirection of the mission to "Greece" (Dibelius), or even to "Europe" (Wikenhauser, Cadbury, and Fitzmyer). These interpretations do not follow the narrative cues of Luke's story, which maintains a distinction between Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21) and makes no reference whatsoever to Εὐρώπη.

More important for the present study is the presumed source of Paul's dream-vision. When they do focus on the source of this vision, the commentators discussed here conclude, with the characters, that Paul's vision at Troas is a divine directive. Only Calvin, Spencer, and Gaventa note the irony, or tension, between what the characters perceive as a breakthrough divine directive and the actual outcome of their trip to Macedonia. Some take the Troas scene as evidence that God directs the mission in its totality (e.g., Talbert and Gaventa). Tannehill and Farahian, on the other hand, insist on seeing the interpretive role of Luke's characters as well. This emphasis is particularly compelling when one considers that Paul's second mission (Acts 15:36) begins without the formal, divine directive found in Acts 13:1–3. These observations invite a broader examination of Paul's dream-vision at Troas within the narrative context of Acts 15–17. This examination will be the focus of chapter 3 below. Before turning to that task, it is necessary to discuss those studies that treat the larger topic of dream-visions in Luke-Acts.

Scholarship on Dreams and Visions in Luke-Acts

Despite the frequency and importance of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, there have been very few studies devoted to this topic.⁶¹ The present examination will include, therefore, dissertations, shorter articles, and sections from monographs that touch on this subject. As in the previous section, the survey of scholarship below will follow a roughly chronological order.

19th Century Scholarship

Schneckenburger

Matthias Schneckenburger, whose commentary on Acts has been regarded as “the most careful and critical study which had been published” through the mid-19th century,⁶² makes only passing references to 16:6–10.⁶³ He does refer more generally, however, to the topic of visions in Acts. Following the reasoning of Baur’s *Tendenzkritik*, Schneckenburger observes in Acts strong undercurrents of the Petrine vs. Pauline controversy. Indeed, he regards Acts as the work of a Paulinist.⁶⁴ Elements of this controversy come to light in the presence and importance of visions in the Acts. Visions represent a Pauline orientation, and Luke’s attribution of an important vision to Peter in Acts 10 functions as a “legitimation” of that orientation:

Die Judaisten wollten von Visionen, deren sich Paulus rühmte, nichts hören ... Dürfen wir nach der feinen Bemerkung Baur’s schon die Stimme vom himmel im zweiten Brief Petri als ein Mittelglied zwischen der paulinischen (visionären) und petrinischen Beglaubigungsweise ansehen, das für die Ausgleichungstendenz dieses Briefes zwischen beiden Parteien spricht: so hat es wohl keine Schwierigkeit, auch die dem Petrus

⁶¹ To date, there are no monographs on the subject. Less than a half-dozen dissertations have treated the subject, and none have been published.

⁶² W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1975; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), 33.

⁶³ For instance, Schneckenburger discusses the question of the “we” passages and the possibility of Luke’s presence (*Über den Zweck der Apostelgeschichte: zugleich eine Ergänzung der neueren Commentare* [Bern: C. Fischer, 1841], 30).

⁶⁴ Gasque, *History of the Interpretation of Acts*, 36.

zugeschriebene Vision kapitel 10 und deren Anerkennung durch die Urgemeinde als eine indirekte Legitimation der paulinischen anzusehen.⁶⁵

Religionsgeschichtliche Schule

Wikenhauser

In the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century, the religionsgeschichtliche Schule was a force to be reckoned with. This movement spawned the first significant studies of dreams and visions in the New Testament in the works of Alfred Wikenhauser. As noted above, Wikenhauser's article, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen zu Apg 16, 9," has had an abiding influence on scholarly discussions of the Troas episode. Four years later, Wikenhauser widened the scope of his study in "Die Traumgeschichte des Neuen Testaments in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht."⁶⁶ This later study maintains a focus on Traumgesichten,⁶⁷ limiting the scope of the NT investigation to Matthew and Acts, but expands his earlier discussion of comparative material from Graeco-Roman literature. After roughly another decade, Wikenhauser produced a study of parallel material for the double-dreams and double-visions found in Acts 9 and 10–11:18.⁶⁸ The primary purpose of this article is to add comparative examples of Doppelträume to those already adduced by his contemporaries.⁶⁹ Wikenhauser also concludes in this study that the vision within a vision found in Acts 9:12, considered by others to be an interpolation, is in keeping with the double-vision form, and is a necessary part of the Ananias story.⁷⁰ In all of these studies, Wikenhauser supplied scholars with a significant amount of comparative material. This contribution is important, even if one rightly questions some of the conclusions Wikenhauser drew from these comparisons (e.g., an identification of Paul with figures like Alexander and Caesar).

⁶⁵ Schneckenburger, *Apostelgeschichte*, 170. The debate over visions and the legitimacy of this sort of revelation comes to a head in the Pseudo-Clementine material (see esp. the *Kerygmata Petrou* [*Homilies* XVII.13–19]).

⁶⁶ See p. 68 n. 8 above.

⁶⁷ Wikenhauser makes a strict distinction between waking and sleeping visions, and examines only the latter: "Das NT. spricht öfters von Gesichtern, und zwar von solchen, die vom Menschen im wachen, und solchen, die im Schlafzustande empfangen werden. Die zweite Art, die man als Traumgesichte bezeichnen kann, findet sich nur bei Mt. und in der Apg." ("Traumgesichte," 320).

⁶⁸ Alfred Wikenhauser, "Doppelträume," *Bib* 29 (1948): 100–111.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

Mid- and Late 20th Century Scholarship

Ernst Benz

Benz's 1952 study, "Paulus als Visionär: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Visionsberichte des Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte und in den paulinischen Briefen," focused on the NT texts describing Paul as a visionary.⁷¹ As the title suggests, a significant portion of this article is devoted to Paul's visionary experiences in Acts. In this and other studies of dream-visions in the Bible,⁷² Benz is interested in illuminating the visionary experiences of biblical figures as part of a larger interest in examining the continuity of visionary revelation in contemporary Christian theology.⁷³ Perhaps in service of this broader interest, Benz tends to over-generalize about the dream-visions in Luke-Acts: "Diese Visionen begleiten sein ganzes Leben und geben ihm die Direktive für alle wichtigen Entscheidungen seiner missionarischen Tätigkeit."⁷⁴ This generalization, of course, ignores passages like Acts 15:36 in which Paul makes important missionary decisions with no directive whatsoever.⁷⁵ Benz's interest in biblical dream-visions as part of a larger agenda is also found in the work of John Sanford.

John A. Sanford

As an Episcopal priest and Jungian analyst, Sanford became interested in dreams as communication from God in the early 1960s. In 1968, he published *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language*,⁷⁶ which contains a lengthy treatment of dreams and visions in the Bible. Because his treatment of biblical dreams and visions serves his psychological agenda, however, he tends to focus on the positive discussions of dream-visions in the Bible.

⁷¹ Ernst Benz, "Paulus als Visionär: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Visionsberichte des Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte und in den paulinischen Briefen," *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur: Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* 2 (1952): 81–121.

⁷² See, for example, Benz's *Dreams, Hallucinations, Visions* (trans. Tomas H. Spiers; New York: Swendenborg Foundation, 1968), 16–23.

⁷³ For example, Benz laments what he describes as "ein allgemeiner antivisionärer Komplex der modernen protestantischen Theologie" ("Paulus als Visionär," 81).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 94–95.

⁷⁵ See the discussion in chapter 3 below.

⁷⁶ John Sanford, *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968; repr. New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

Of the passages that treat dream-visions negatively, Sanford mentions only Num 12:8 and Jer 23:16.⁷⁷ His summary remarks are revealing: “Dreams and visions were regarded in both the Old and New Testament as revelations from God... . Viewed from this perspective the entire Bible is the story of God’s breakthrough into the human conscious mind via the unconscious.”⁷⁸ Despite such generalizations, Sanford’s treatment is helpful inasmuch as it highlights the importance of dreams and visions in the biblical literature.

Morton T. Kelsey

In the same year that Sanford first published *Dreams: God’s Forgotten Language*, another Jungian outside the field of biblical studies published a discussion of dreams and visions. Kelsey’s study goes a bit farther than Sanford’s, examining the role of dreams in both the Bible and in other Graeco-Roman literature.⁷⁹ Although his work focuses on a psychological understanding of dreams and is directed toward a popular audience, Kelsey attempts a relatively thorough examination of the biblical material. He notes the coalescence of terms like “dream” and “vision” in Hebrew literature,⁸⁰ and discusses the various terminology used for dreams and visions in Greek.⁸¹

Kelsey also examines the evidence for belief in dreams across this spectrum of literature. Although he is to be commended for raising a number of interesting questions and observations about dreams and visions in the ancient world, Kelsey draws a number of misleading conclusions. He argues for a greater tension regarding dreams in the OT material than actually appears in the texts.⁸² In Graeco-Roman

⁷⁷ *Dreams*, 81. As noted in chapter 1, I would disagree with this classification of Num 12:8.

⁷⁸ *Dreams*, 94. Sanford omits Isa 29:8 and Eccl 5:2 from his discussion altogether.

⁷⁹ See Morton T. Kelsey, *Dreams: The Dark Speech of the Spirit. A Christian Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 17–101. Kelsey’s later work (*God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation. Revised and Expanded Edition* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]) is substantially unchanged in the sections of interest. Therefore, I have placed Kelsey at this point in the present survey.

⁸⁰ Kelsey, *Dark Speech of the Spirit*, 19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 80–86. As with other sections of the book, Kelsey’s focus is on psychological experience. Therefore, he includes terms that are not strictly visionary. Hanson’s terminological discussion (noted above) is more thorough and more clear for a literary discussion.

⁸² Kelsey regards a number of OT texts as evidence for suspicion of dreams. However, some of these texts, like Num 12:6–8, do not seem to question the validity of

texts, on the contrary, Kelsey argues that there is wide-scale acceptance of dreams as revelatory.⁸³ These erroneous observations lead to the more troubling conclusion that the lack of suspicion toward dreams in the NT is a result of the influence of Greek culture and literature, which has eclipsed the suspicion of dreams and visions supposedly found in earlier OT passages. His generalizations have led Kelsey to a conclusion about dreams and visions in the NT that is precisely backwards. As shown in chapter 1, the most explicit evidence for the suspicion of dreams and visions as revelatory experiences is from non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature. Conversely, the dream-visions in Luke-Acts—with their emphasis on angels and the Holy Spirit—resemble those in Jewish Scripture far more than those in non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature.

John Hanson

The first full-length treatment of the dream-vision material in Luke-Acts is found in the 1978 Harvard dissertation of John Hanson, “The Dream-Vision Report and Acts 10:1 – 11:18: A Form-Critical Study.” As the title suggests, Hanson’s purpose in this study is to compare this complex of dream-visions in Acts with those found in Graeco-Roman literature with the goal of establishing a common form. Indeed, Hanson demonstrates that there was a common form employed to describe dream-vision reports in the ancient world.⁸⁴

In 1980, Hanson’s more general study, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” appeared in *ANRW*. This examination focuses on the broader context of dream-visions in

dreams, *per se*. Others, like Jer 27:9 and Ezek 13:2, point to a tension between true and false prophecy. None of these texts approach the actual suspicion of dreams mentioned in texts like Homer’s *Od.* 19. Only rarely does the OT describe dreams in a way that negates their revelatory capacity (e.g., Isa 29:8; Eccl 5:2).

⁸³ Kelsey’s insistence on this point seems strange. Not only is he aware of passages that indicate suspicion, he even quotes Homer, *Od.* 19.559ff., in which Penelope tells her “guest” that some dreams do not come true. Despite the pervasive influence of this text, Kelsey offers only the following comment: “But like Penelope, these early Greeks knew, as far back as we have any record, that there were different kinds of dreams, some of them imperative, and others, just as today, cloudy and uncertain” (*Dark Speech of the Spirit*, 55).

⁸⁴ Hanson’s work has influenced not only those looking at dream-visions in Luke-Acts (e.g., the work of Michael James Day noted below), but also those examining dream-visions in other ancient texts (e.g., Robert Gnuse’s *Dreams and Dream Reports*).

Graeco-Roman literature, the New Testament, and early Christian texts. Again, form is a key consideration, but he also discusses issues like belief in the revelatory power of dreams. To repeat the conclusions of Hanson cited in chapter 1:

the dream experience is universal and is matched by an almost universal belief in the dream as divine or supernatural. That is, dreams and visions are revelatory, and while the ancients saw their value as primarily for the future, they served other purposes as well. The extant data show that dreams and visions were nearly always considered meaningful or significant.⁸⁵

In this later article, Hanson's comments about the use of dream-visions in Luke-Acts are brief, but interesting. Of primary interest to Hanson are the double-visions found in 9:1–19 and 10:1–23 and repeated later in the text. Hanson suggests that these passages seem to constitute “the earliest Christian example of the elaboration of the dream-vision report.”⁸⁶ For anyone studying these passages, Hanson's somewhat understated comment is compelling. Dreams and visions are certainly pervasive in ancient literature. The complexity of Luke's dream-visions, however, is not so pervasive. The intricate repetition involved in the dream-vision reports of Paul and Peter alone sends one searching for possible literary models.⁸⁷ So far, no one has succeeded in producing such a model.

Shawn Kelley

The focus of Kelley's 1991 Vanderbilt dissertation, “‘And Your Young Will See Visions’: A Functionalist Literary Reading of the Visions to Saul and Peter in Acts,” represents a shift toward a literary-critical examination of the dream-visions in Acts 9–11. Kelley situates his study as an alternative to what he regards as the domination of style criticism in Acts scholarship.⁸⁸ Kelley suggests that a “functionalist” lit-

⁸⁵ Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1396.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1422.

⁸⁷ Dennis R. MacDonald has attempted to demonstrate that Luke's presentation of the Cornelius–Peter episode is an imitation of the “lying dream” sent by Zeus to Agamemnon in *Iliad* 2 (*Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 44–65). MacDonald's findings are intriguing. Unfortunately, most of what he adduces as evidence of dependence can be explained more easily as similarities based on the common form of dream-vision reports in Graeco-Roman literature.

⁸⁸ Kelley's apparent lack of familiarity with the earlier work of Wikenhauser, Benz,

erary reading of this material contends against the consensus of style criticism—that Acts 9–11 represents an elevation of Peter and denigration of Paul.⁸⁹

Kelley suggests that Luke uses the rhetorical trope *synkrisis* in the vision complexes of Acts 9–11. The result is that the reader is compelled to read and compare the respective visions of Saul and Peter. Kelley's literary analysis focuses on the way these visions depict God overcoming two very different "types" of opposition.⁹⁰ Although there are few points of contact between Kelley's work and the present study, his emphasis on literary questions does yield interesting results.

John Squires

Squires's monograph, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*,⁹¹ highlights the pervasiveness of the "Plan of God" theme in Luke-Acts and compares Luke's presentation of divine providence with similar presentations in the Hellenistic historians like Dionysius, Diodorus, and Josephus. The fifth chapter of Squires's work is devoted to a discussion of "Epiphanies: Inspired Indications of the Plan of God." Squires provides an excellent examination of epiphanies in the Hellenistic historians noted above. In relation to Luke-Acts, he also notes well and thoroughly the importance of epiphanies—experiences that fit within the parameters of a "dream-vision" in the present discussion—for the explication of the Plan of God in Luke's story.⁹² Given the title and purpose of his work, it is

and Hanson leads him to lament: "There has been virtually no critical scholarship on the Lukan vision scenes as vision scenes" (11).

⁸⁹ Kelley, "A Functionalist Literary Reading," 29–32.

⁹⁰ Kelley adheres to the theory that characters in ancient writing are representational.

⁹¹ John Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 76; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993).

⁹² At a number of points, Squires presses the analogy between Hellenistic historiography and Luke-Acts too far; and this element of his discussion is pertinent to Luke's use of dream-visions. In reference to the vision of Zechariah in Luke 1, for example, Squires argues: "although the epiphanies and oracles are reminiscent of traditional scriptural incidents, these portentous occurrences need not be comprehensible solely within a Jewish tradition" (*Plan of God*, 113). More generally, this assertion may be true. Zechariah's interpretation of this event in the Benedictus does reflect, however, an understanding of this event "solely" in terms of "Jewish tradition" (i.e., Jewish Scripture). This example reflects one of the significant problems with Squires's study: his attempt to bring *everything* about the Plan of God theme in Luke-Acts into conversation with Hellenistic historiography sometimes results in strained argumentation.

perhaps understandable that Squires pays little attention to the role of human/character perception in relation to these epiphanies. The problem with this interpretation is simply that it is too one-sided. It is true that Luke uses dream-visions to “confirm . . . God’s guidance of events” in the story.⁹³ What the present study will demonstrate is that Luke is just as intent on showing how people perceive God’s will in light of such visionary experiences.

Michael James Day

Day’s 1994 Southern Baptist Theological Seminary dissertation, “The Function of Post-Pentecost Dream/Vision Reports in Acts,” is the only full-length study to date attempting to deal with the overall function of dream-visions in Acts.⁹⁴ Using Hanson’s form-critical work as a foundation, Day examines the dream-vision passages in Acts against the backdrop of dream-vision stories in the OT, ancient romances, ancient histories, and ancient biographies. Based on this background literature, Day suggests that there are four aspects of ancient dream-visions that must be examined: Dream Type, Dream Context, Dream Function, and Dream Fulfillment.⁹⁵ The first is a form-critical category, and Day concludes that most of the dream-visions in his examination fit Hanson’s “audio-visual” form. In terms of Context, most dream-visions are situated in passages describing crisis situations. Dream Function is the category that is the most significant for Day’s work. He posits four sub-categories under this heading. First are those dream-visions offering some sort of divine directive. Next, there are dream-visions that lead to the worship of a deity. Third are those dream-visions that provide reassurance. Finally, there are dream visions that reveal supernatural confirmation of a character.⁹⁶ Within the category of Dream Fulfillment, Day concurs with the general sentiments of Hanson that most dream-visions in the literature he surveys result in the promised fulfillment.⁹⁷

⁹³ *Plan of God*, 120.

⁹⁴ As the title suggests, Day does not incorporate material before Acts 5 in his investigation. Thus far, no one has produced an examination of dream-visions in Luke-Acts as a whole.

⁹⁵ Day, “Function,” 83–90.

⁹⁶ Day, “Function,” 85–89.

⁹⁷ Day goes on to state: “Furthermore, only a small number of references are even made to false dreams or inaccurate dream messages” (89). As I have argued in

Day argues that the post-Pentecost dream-visions of Acts fit nicely within the four previously mentioned subcategories of Dream Function. Acts 5:17–21, 13:1–3, 16:6–12, and 22:17–21 contain directives for the activities of characters in the story. Acts 8:25–40, 9:1–19, and 10:1–11:18 contain dream-vision reports that lead to the call or conversion of a character. Acts 12:1–11, 18:5–11, 23:11, and 27:21–26 describe dream-visions providing assurance to characters. Finally, Acts 6:8–7:60, 22:1–16, and 26:4–20 feature dream-vision reports that supernaturally confirm a character in the story.

Because he attempts to treat most of the dream-visions in Acts, Day's study marks an important step in the examination of the overall function of dream-visions in Luke-Acts. As far as it goes, it is quite helpful. Like some other studies of dream-visions in Acts, however, the focus on form criticism in this work leads to a rather limited treatment of the material. Because they share a common form, dream-vision reports from a broad spectrum of literary genres are lumped together, with little regard for subtle differences in function.

David Allan Handy

The most recent full-length treatment of a dream-vision passage in Acts is Handy's 1998 Union Theological Seminary (Richmond) dissertation, "The Gentile Pentecost: A Literary Study of the Story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1 – 11:18)." Handy does not treat extensively the visionary character of this text, however. Instead, his contributions to the discussion of this passage lie primarily in a thorough discussion of the biblical allusions and echoes found in Acts 10:1 – 11:18⁹⁸ and a literary-critical treatment of the repetitions and gaps found in this portion of Luke's narrative.⁹⁹ Handy argues that Luke uses gaps and

chapter 1, this sort of conclusion is misleading. It misrepresents the complex spectrum of belief in dream-visions evidenced by ancient literature. Indeed it is significant that Day fails to mention part of a text he analyzes. In his discussion of dream-visions in historical writing, Day mentions the dreams of Latinus in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.*, 7.68). Day notes that Latinus' initial reaction was to "[disregard] the dream as foolishness" ("Function," 57). What he does not record is the statement in Dionysius that Latinus disregarded the dream as "just one of many deceptive" dreams (ἀλλ' ἐν τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀπατηλῶν [*Ant. rom.* 7.68.4]). See my discussion of this passage above (p. 35).

⁹⁸ Handy, "The Gentile Pentecost," 36–61.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62–114.

repetition to create a suspenseful account with similar qualities to what might now be called a “detective story.”¹⁰⁰

Summary

The studies surveyed above have examined Luke’s dream-visions from a variety of perspectives. Wikenhauser provided comparative studies according to the canons of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Dreams and visions in the Bible have been examined as part of a larger interest in contemporary theology or psychology in the work of Benz, Sanford, and Kelsey. The more prominent scholarly examinations of dream-visions in Luke-Acts have emphasized form-critical concerns (Hanson and Day). Finally, some more recent studies have looked into the function of some of the dream-visions in Luke’s narrative (Kelley, Squires, and Handy). Despite some critical issues noted above, all of these treatments offer helpful insights. A number of questions about Luke’s use of dream-visions, however, remain unexplored.

How do Luke’s dream-visions relate to one another? For the most part, the studies surveyed here examine one or two of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts in isolation from the rest. No examination has yet been offered that treats all of Luke’s dream-visions. Although it is interesting to see the ways in which dream-visions in antiquity share formal elements, one also finds differences in the function of dream-visions from text to text. Thus, one may ask, how do dream-visions function as a whole in Luke-Acts? Do they serve only a theological role, providing a vehicle for God’s actions in the story? Or, do they also reveal something about Luke’s anthropology, depicting people attempting to interpret their visionary experiences? These questions drive the remainder of the present study.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 73 and *passim*.

CHAPTER THREE

PAUL'S DREAM-VISION AT TROAS (ACTS 16:6–10)

The survey of research in the previous chapter reveals the minimal treatment that these five verses often receive. Most commentators have been far more concerned with the introduction of the first person pronoun in v. 10 than with Paul's peculiar vision of a Macedonian man asking for help. Within the context of Luke's use of dream-visions, however, this episode invites special attention because of a number of anomalous features. The analysis that follows will explore the relationship between Paul's vision in 16:9 and the interpretation offered in 16:10. This episode will then be examined in light of the broader narrative context of Acts 13–17. As Calvin observed, Paul's mission to Macedonia seems rather anticlimactic.¹ Nevertheless, all of the commentators discussed in chapter 2 agree with the assumption of the characters—that God is using this vision to call Paul and company to Macedonia. In contrast, the present study will linger over the human interpretations and decisions in this passage and in the broader narrative context. The point of this analysis is not to suggest that Paul's interpretation of the vision is incorrect, but to examine the way human decisions and interpretations play out in this portion of Luke's narrative. Finally, the theological implications of such a reading will be considered.

Analysis of Acts 16:6–10

The context of Paul's ὄραμα at Troas, and the immediate response to it, are narrated briefly in Acts 16:6–10:

6 Διήλθον δὲ τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν κωλυθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ
ἀγίου πνεύματος λαλῆσαι τὸν λόγον ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· 7 ἐλθόντες δὲ κατὰ τὴν
Μυσίαν ἐπείραζον εἰς τὴν Βιθυνίαν πορευθῆναι, καὶ οὐκ εἶασεν αὐτοὺς
τὸ πνεῦμα Ἰησοῦ· 8 παρελθόντες δὲ τὴν Μυσίαν κατέβησαν εἰς Τρωάδα.
9 καὶ ὄραμα διὰ [τῆς]² νυκτός τῳ Παύλῳ ὤφθη, ἀνὴρ Μακεδὼν τις ἦν

¹ Calvin, *Acts* 14–28, 69–74; see also the discussion in chapter 2 above.

² The oldest MSS are divided on this variant. Neither reading significantly affects the present discussion of this passage.

ἐστὼς καὶ παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγων, Διαβὰς εἰς Μακεδονίαν βοήθησον ἡμῖν. 10 ὥς δὲ τὸ ὄραμα εἶδεν, εὐθέως ἐζητήσαμεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς Μακεδονίαν συμβιβάζοντες ὅτι προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εὐαγγελίσασθαι αὐτούς.

6 They went through Phrygia and Galatia, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word in Asia. 7 Having come opposite Mysia, they attempted to enter Bithynia. The Spirit of Jesus, however, would not permit them. 8 Passing Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul during the night. A certain Macedonian man stood beseeching him, saying, “Come to Macedonia and help us.” 10 When he saw the vision, we immediately sought to go to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Acts 15:36 – 16:5 describes the beginning of Paul’s so-called “second missionary journey,” and its initial success. Churches are strengthened (15:40); Timothy, a new disciple/assistant, is acquired (16:1–3); more churches are strengthened and their numbers grow (16:5). These summary successes are followed in 16:6–8 by even more abbreviated frustrations. Paul and company travel through Phrygia and Galatia, prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word in Asia (16:6). Their frustration is heightened in 16:7 when they “attempt” to enter Bithynia, but the “Spirit of Jesus” will not permit them.

The Spirit has been actively involved in the spread of the gospel up to this point.³ This activity, however, has always been “positive”: the Spirit has led characters to proclaim the gospel to receptive individuals. In Acts 16:6–7, the Spirit acts “negatively” for the first time, restraining characters from proclaiming the gospel in particular regions.⁴ Such hindrance seems to run contrary to the programmatic commission in Acts 1:8, in which Jesus tells the apostles that they “will receive power”

³ See especially Acts 1:8 and 13:2–4; see also Acts 8:29 and 39, and 10:19–20. This type of positive guidance continues later in Acts 20:22 and 21:4.

⁴ Commenting on this aspect of Acts 16:6–7, William Shepherd argues: “Luke tinges what has become a common characterization of the Spirit with irony. The Spirit is again presented as a direct actor, again in conflict with human characters. But against type, the Spirit at first seems to forbid that which it usually empowers: the proclamation of the gospel. Only at the end of the story do we see the purpose of this seemingly contradictory action: the Spirit is guiding the mission towards Europe by forbidding it to go elsewhere. The actions of the Spirit are unexpected, providing suspense and surprise for the reader, while eventually proving consistent with the portrait Luke has been painting all along. Thus Luke momentarily introduces some incoherence into his characterization of the Spirit, only to establish more fully its coherence” (*The Narrative Function of the*

when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and that they “will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth.” So far in the story, the Spirit has been fulfilling this empowering role. Acts 16:6–7 marks the Spirit’s first departure from it. This “first” in the story demands attention, as does the language Luke uses in the passage.

The language Luke uses to describe this episode is interesting. Nowhere else in the OT or NT does the Holy Spirit hinder (κωλύω) movement or action. Just as unique is Luke’s mention of the “Spirit of Jesus.” Found elsewhere in the NT only in Phil 1:19 (where it is “the Spirit of Jesus Christ”),⁵ this phrase is somewhat puzzling.⁶ Although one might be tempted to argue that Luke is varying language for stylistic reasons, “Holy Spirit” is repeated in successive verses elsewhere in Luke-Acts.⁷ Lacking parallels in Luke’s narrative,⁸ it is difficult to draw definite conclusions about the meaning of this expression in the Troas episode. What is certain, however, is that the variation from Holy Spirit to Spirit of Jesus stands out and emphasizes the heavenly source of this negative guidance. This initial anomaly serves to underscore what the characters perceive as positive divine guidance in Paul’s dream-vision.

Prevented from entering Bithynia, Paul and company pass Mysia and come down to Troas. There, a vision appears to Paul “during the

Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts [SBLDS 147; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994], 222–223).

These comments are in line with Shepherd’s earlier evaluation of 16:9, “*God* provides positive instruction to Paul through a vision... . Luke gives *no human motivation* for Paul’s itinerary, no reference to the goals of the human missionaries; the direction is *strictly divine*” (*Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit*, 221–222 [emphasis mine]). The problem, of course, is that this simply is not in the text. God’s (or the Spirit’s) role in this dream-vision is offered in the interpretation of the characters (16:10), but occurs nowhere in the ὄραμα itself.

⁵ See also the expression πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ in 1 Pet 1:11.

⁶ Some scholars simply gloss over this variation, claiming that this is the same as the “Holy Spirit.” See, for example, Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 484. Fitzmyer regards this as a “parallelism with the ‘Holy Spirit’” in v. 6 (*Acts*, 578). Noting that some manuscript traditions have attempted to fix this problem by changing it to πνεῦμα κυρίου, Johnson asserts that “Spirit of Jesus” is probably correct and fits with Jesus’ continuing activity in the narrative of Acts (*Acts*, 285). Spencer concurs that this phrase conveys “the abiding sense of Jesus’ involvement with his emissaries” (*Acts*, 162).

⁷ See, for example, Luke 2:25–26 and 12:10–12.

⁸ The closest Lukan similarity is found in the expression πνεῦμα κυρίου in Luke 4:18, Acts 5:9 and 8:39.

night,”⁹ in which “a certain Macedonian man”¹⁰ asks Paul to “come to Macedonia and help us.”¹¹ It is significant that this verse features both the adjective “Macedonian” and the noun “Macedonia.” This repetition is furthered emphasized by the personal pronoun, ἡμῖν, which indirectly refers to Macedonia for the third time in this brief sentence. In the course of the next two chapters, Paul will travel to both Macedonia and Achaia.¹² The vision, however, contains no mention of the latter, but repeats the former twice. This repetition deserves special notice, especially in light of the assumptions of scholars like Dibelius, who treat this passage as divine intervention guiding Paul to Macedonia and Greece.¹³ Far from a vague “Go west, young man” sentiment

⁹ See also Acts 18:9. Luke’s expression, ὄραμα διὰ νυκτός (the textual variant including the definite article before νυκτός is of little consequence), is somewhat reminiscent of passages in Genesis and Daniel that feature a combination of the terms ὄραμα and νύξ (Gen 46:2; Dan 2:19, 7:7, 7:13, and 7:15). The exact phrase, however, does not occur in the LXX.

Acts 16:9 and 18:9 are the only two passages in Luke-Acts in which one finds vision terminology combined with the explicit stipulation that the event took place at night. There are other visionary experiences in Luke-Acts that occur during the night, but these stories do not contain vision terminology. Instead, the visionary nature of each episode must be evaluated from the context. In Acts 5:19, an angel of the Lord frees the apostles from prison and commands them to preach in the temple. Peter is again freed from prison by an angel of the Lord during the night in Acts 12:6–10. In Acts 16:9 and 18:9, however, one finds the specific combination of ὄραμα and νύξ. Although this may seem a trifling point, Acts 16:9 and 18:9 provide important evidence for the understanding of Luke’s use of visions by reinforcing two important conclusions of Hanson noted above. First, Luke uses ὄραμα to refer to dream-vision characters experience during the day (Acts 10:3 and 10:17), as well as those that occur at night. From the perspective of terminology, Luke does not distinguish between “vision” and “dream.” Second, Luke’s use of ὄραμα reinforces a broad understanding of “visions” to include both visual and strictly auditory experiences (cf. the use of ὄραμα in Acts 16:9 [auditory and visual] with that in Acts 18:9–11 [strictly auditory]).

¹⁰ The significance of this dream figure is discussed below. Some other dream-visions in Luke-Acts describe a “man” or “men” as the primary dream figure (Luke 24:4–7; Acts 1:10 and 9:12). The lack of a divine agent apparently has caused some scholars like Wikenhauser to see this dream-vision as a parallel to those found in non-Jewish Graeco-Roman texts (see the discussion of his “Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen zu Apg 16, 9” in chapter 2). There are Jewish texts, however, that employ similarly human dream figures. See, for example, the dream-vision of Judas in 2 Macc 15:11–16, discussed in chapter 1 above.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that this verb for “help,” βοηθέω, occurs only twice in Luke-Acts. The other use is less congenial; in Acts 21:28 when the “Jews from Asia” seize Paul, they request the “help” of their fellow Israelites.

¹² There can be no question that Luke knew the distinction between Macedonia and Achaia; see Acts 18:12, 27; and 19:21.

¹³ Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 76; see also the discussion in chapter 2 above.

enticing Paul to “Europe,”¹⁴ Luke’s language draws definite and specific attention to Macedonia. This emphasis raises a number of interesting questions, which will be taken up below.

The somewhat redundant combination “beseeching” and “saying” (i.e., a finite form of παρακαλέω and a participial form of λέγω) appears to be a common expression for Luke.¹⁵ It is noteworthy, however, that this is the only dream-vision passage in Luke-Acts in which one finds the verb παρακαλέω. Commands are common in visionary scenes, but here the imperative βοήθησον is softened as the Macedonian “beseeches” Paul for help. The Macedonian’s request is made in language uncommon in the rest of Luke-Acts. Despite the frequency of travel terminology, διαβαίνω occurs only in this verse and in Luke 16:26.¹⁶ The verb βοηθέω is found twice¹⁷ in Luke-Acts.¹⁸ Although either verb may allude to the passages noted, διαβαίνω and βοηθέω are not combined anywhere in the LXX.¹⁹

Following the narrator’s account of the vision in v. 9, one finds a striking transition in v. 10. The text simply states, “when *he* saw the vision, *we* immediately sought to go to Macedonia.”²⁰ Here, for the first time in Acts, the narrative voice casually slips into the first-person plural.²¹ The participial phrase that follows in v. 10 is perhaps the

¹⁴ See the discussion of Wikenhauser, Dibelius, and others in chapter 2.

¹⁵ See, for example, Luke 7:4, Acts 2:40, and 27:33. The most significant parallel is Acts 16:15.

¹⁶ Note that the expression διαβαίνω εἰς followed by a place name is the construction used frequently in the LXX to describe the Israelites crossing over into the land of Canaan (e.g., Num 32:7 and 32, 33:51, and 35:10).

¹⁷ See note 11 above.

¹⁸ The imperative of βοηθέω combined with a form of the personal pronoun is found frequently in the LXX, especially in the Psalms (e.g., LXX Ps. 39:14, 43:27, 69:6).

¹⁹ The only texts in which the verbs even appear in close proximity are 1 Chron 12:19–20 and 19:17–19.

²⁰ The Western text, represented by MS D, fills out this part of the story. According to this manuscript, v. 10 reads: διεγερθεῖς σὺν διηγήσατο τὸ ὄραμα ἡμῖν καὶ ἐνοήσαμεν ὅτι προσκέκληται ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος εὐαγγελίσασθαι τοὺς ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ.

The combination of ὄραμα and ζητέω (found in most MSS, but not in D) is interesting. This combination occurs in other visionary passages in Acts. In Acts 9:10–11, the Lord speaks to Ananias in a vision (ὄραμα) and tells him, “go ... seek (ζητέω) a man named Saul in the house of Judas. Another instance is 10:19: “As Peter pondered the vision (ὄραμα), the Spirit said, ‘behold, three men are looking (ζητέω) for you.’”

²¹ The ongoing debate over the nature and significance of the “we” passages in Acts is beyond the scope of this discussion. For summaries of the various opinions on this issue, see Haenchen (*Acts of the Apostles*, 489–491) and Barrett (*Acts*, 772–773). See also James Blaisdell, “The Authorship of the ‘We’ Sections of the Book of Acts” (*HTR* 13 [1920]:136–158); Henry J. Cadbury, “‘We’ and ‘I’ Passages in Luke/Acts” (*NTS* 3

most significant aspect of this vision for the topic at hand: “convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.”²² The verb συμβιβάζω, when combined with ὅτι, generally means either “to demonstrate that” or “to conclude that.”²³ This construction occurs nowhere else in the OT or NT except Acts, where it is found at 9:22 and the passage at hand. Acts 16:10 requires the latter meaning: the characters are drawing a conclusion based on Paul’s visionary experience.²⁴

For the most part, the dream-visions in Luke-Acts feature angelic intermediaries, or even the Holy Spirit.²⁵ One of the most intriguing anomalies in Paul’s dream-vision at Troas is the absence of any reference to a divine agent. Only in the characters’²⁶ own conclusions about

[1957]: 128–132); S.M. Praeder, “The Problem of First-Person Narration in Acts” (*NouT* 29 [1987]: 193–218); and William S. Campbell, “Who are We in Acts?: The First-Person Plural Character in the Acts of the Apostles” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000).

²² Of all the language in this visionary scene, this clause contains some interesting evidence for a specific allusion to Jewish Scripture. Although the idea of “being called to proclaim the good news” might seem fairly commonplace to modern ears, the verbs προσκαλέομαι and εὐαγγελίζω are combined only twice in the entire corpus of the LXX and NT. Besides Acts 16:10, this combination occurs only in LXX Joel 3:5. This is particularly striking given the fact that this is the passage cut from the quotation of Joel in Peter’s Pentecost speech. In Acts 2:21, the quotation ends with Joel 3:5a: καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται (“and it will be that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved”). Joel 3:5 continues: ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σιών καὶ ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἔσται ἀνασωζόμενος καθότι εἶπεν κύριος καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι οὓς κύριος προσέκλῃται (“because on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be the one who is delivered, just as the Lord said, and the ones who hear the good news—whom the Lord had called”). The difficulty of calling this an allusion, of course, is making sense of it. It would seem that the reason Joel 3:5b is not included in the Pentecost sermon is because it focuses exclusively on Zion and Jerusalem. Peter’s audience, on the other hand, is comprised of people of many nationalities. Adding to the problem is the fact that this passage in the LXX is a puzzling translation if one presumes a Hebrew original approximating the MT. As the text stands, εὐαγγελιζόμενοι does seem to be a passive (as Brenton has taken it); to read it otherwise breaks the parallelism with ἀνασωζόμενος. Acts 16:10, therefore, makes little sense as an allusion. It would seem more likely that the linguistic elements of this portion of Joel—a passage with which Luke was obviously familiar—had some influence on him.

²³ BDAG, s.v. “συμβιβάζω.”

²⁴ The earlier use in 9:22 could indicate either meaning: Σαῦλος δὲ μάλλον ἐνεδυναμοῦτο καὶ συνέχυνεν [τοὺς] Ἰουδαίους τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν Δαμασκῷ συμβιβάζων ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός (either “Saul was growing stronger and confusing [the] Jews living in Damascus, concluding that this one is the Christ,” or “demonstrating that this one is the Christ”).

²⁵ See the discussion in chapters 4 and 5 below.

²⁶ The reference to “characters” here is a reflection of the first-person plural in the

the meaning of the dream-vision is God mentioned at all. As the previous chapter indicates, most commentators have accepted the characters' assumptions about the divine source of this dream-vision. For the purpose of this narrative-critical examination, however, the absence of any reference to a divine agent in v. 9 is significant. Luke employs dream-visions frequently in his narrative, and characters are sometimes required to interpret these visionary encounters.²⁷ Nevertheless, it is important that this dream-vision lacks a divine agent and invites interpretation.²⁸

Although Luke does not adhere to a rigid formula in his descriptions of dream-visions, divine agents appear in practically all of the visionary passages in Luke-Acts. There are three possible exceptions: Luke 24:4–7, Acts 1:10, and Acts 9:12. In Luke 24:4–7, the women visiting the tomb are approached by two “men” in “dazzling attire.” These two seem to reappear in Acts 1:10.²⁹ Identification of these anonymous characters as otherworldly is supported by the description of the event given by Cleopas to the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus: “some women from among us ... said they had seen a vision of angels” (Luke 24:22–23). This same fluidity occurs in Cornelius' description of his dream-vision in Acts 10:30. In Acts 10:3, the narrator tells us that Cornelius “saw in a vision ... an angel of the Lord.” Cornelius' own version of this event in 10:30 is slightly different: “a man stood before me in bright clothes.”³⁰ In Acts 9:12, the subject of Paul's vision is “a man named Ananias,” rather than an otherworldly figure. The description of this dream-vision, however, is embedded in a dream-vision in which the Lord is speaking to Ananias.³¹ The correlation between

narrative. I am not using this term as a way of siding with any particular interpretation in the ongoing discussions of the “we” passages. In any case, the narrator has made clear that Paul is not alone, but is accompanied, at the very least, by Silas and Timothy.

²⁷ See, for example, Peter's reaction to his dream-vision in Acts 10:17–19.

²⁸ As a contrast, one may note the visionary experiences in the infancy narrative (Luke 1). Both Zechariah and Mary encounter the angel Gabriel, who has been sent by God. Their visions do not require interpretation, but they interpret them anyway in the Magnificat and Benedictus.

²⁹ The Greek text of the two passages is remarkably similar: *καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς ἐν ἑσθῇτι ἀστραποῦσῃ* (Luke 24:4), and *καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο παρειστήκεισαν αὐτοῖς ἐν ἑσθήσεσι λευκαῖς* (Acts 1:10).

³⁰ Again, note the remarkable similarity between the language used here (*καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ ἕστη ἐνώπιόν μου ἐν ἑσθῇτι λαμπρᾷ*) and that found in Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10.

³¹ This concept of a double dream-vision was relatively common in ancient literature. One of the more famous examples, discussed in chapter 1 above, is the double

the Lord's command to Ananias and the foreshadowing dream-vision being seen by Paul suggests the divine origin of Paul's visionary experience.

Considering both the frequency of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, and the element of divine agency that pervades all of these *except* the Troas vision, a puzzling question arises: Why the change? Why here? The discussion of context below will focus more attention on the place of this passage within the larger narrative. For the moment, it is significant to note that the dream-vision at Troas facilitates a plot transition. In any story, plot transitions are important. In Acts, a story in which so much of the action is directly influenced by God,³² transitions in which God's direction must be inferred are all the more important. If Luke's general presentation of divine intervention is strong enough to provoke the censure of some commentators,³³ then those transitions where the characters are left to interpret the direction of God must be significant.

A close reading of Acts 16:6–10 reveals a distinctly human side of Luke's story. Although the characters are quick to interpret their experience theologically, this is nevertheless an *interpretation*. Indeed, their enthusiastic response invites a closer examination of their experience in Macedonia. At this point, therefore, it is necessary to examine the Troas episode within the larger narrative context of Acts 13:1 – 17:15.³⁴

dream-vision of Alexander the Great and the Jewish high priest, Jaddus, in Josephus, *Ant.* 11.333–335. See also, Wikenhauser, "Doppelträume," 100–111.

³² Numerous studies have underscored the importance of God's direction in Luke-Acts. See, for example, S. Schulz ("Gottes Vorsehung bei Lukas," *ZNW* 54 [1963]: 104–116), Charles Cosgrove ("The Divine ΔΕΙ in Luke-Acts," *NovT* 26 [1984]: 168–190), and John Squires (*Plan of God*). The obvious importance of God's role in directing actions in Luke-Acts does not undermine the underlying thesis of this study—that Luke also emphasizes the role of human perception and the way that individuals interpret their visionary encounters as manifestations of God's will. There is a "symbiosis" (to use Farahian's term ["Paul's Vision at Troas," 207; see also the discussion in chapter 2 above]) between God and the human characters in Luke-Acts. God certainly inspires and directs action, but Luke is careful to show how human characters understand and respond to these stimuli. The study of Cosgrove noted above demonstrates this relationship nicely, as does the study of Farahian mentioned earlier.

³³ See, for example, the comments of Haenchen and Pervo discussed earlier in the introduction and chapter 2.

³⁴ As noted above, Paul's dream-vision emphasizes Macedonia, but mentions nothing about Achaia. It will be interesting, therefore, to limit initially the examination of the aftermath of Paul's dream-vision to the description of events in the Macedonian region.

*Setting the Troas Passage in Context**Preceding Context (Acts 13:1–16:5)*

A number of scholars have described Paul's dream-vision at Troas as a second commissioning scene, paralleling the original commission of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:1–3.³⁵ Since such parallels have been drawn, it will be interesting to begin the present contextual examination with this first commission. Although a detailed examination of chapters 13–15 is beyond the scope of this discussion, a brief sketch of the events described in these chapters will prove illuminating.

In 13:1–2, the Holy Spirit speaks to the believers in Antioch “while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting,”³⁶ saying “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them to do.”³⁷ Far from ambiguous, this commissioning is placed in the “mouth” of the Holy Spirit, whose role in directing Barnabas and Saul is further emphasized in 13:4 (“therefore, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia”). Although the exact course of their journey is not foreshadowed, the initiation and guidance of the Holy Spirit are clear.³⁸

³⁵ See, for example, Talbert (*Reading Acts*, 147), and Spencer (*Acts*, 161). On the problems with classifying this as *Paul's* missionary journey, see Gaventa (*Acts*, 190–191). The language of Acts 13:1–3 clearly designates this missionary journey as the work of the Spirit. My discussion generally focuses on the role of the human characters in this narrative unit, but this is not meant to deny those passages in which divine agency is clearly at work.

³⁶ The language of this passage is interesting. The verb *λειτουργέω* is found only here in Luke-Acts, and only twice in the rest of the NT (Rom 15:27 and Heb 10:11). It is used extensively in the LXX, however, to render descriptions of priestly service (see, for example, Exod 28:35, 43; 29:30; 30:20; 35:19; 36:33; 38:27; 39:11f.; Num 1:50; 3:6, 31; 4:3, 9, 12, 14, 23, 26, 30, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43; 8:22, 26; 16:9; 18:2, 6, 21, 23 [the use in Heb 10:11 is similar]). This is particularly striking since the church at Antioch included Gentiles (cf. Acts 15:1). On this language, see also Haenchen (*Acts of the Apostles*, 395–396).

³⁷ On the form of auditory visions, see the introduction above.

³⁸ As Haenchen has noted, “Barnabas and Paul are not mentioned together in v. 1, in order that their future association may appear founded solely on the direction of the Spirit... Luke wants to make it quite clear that properly it is not these men but the Holy Spirit who brings about this mission” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 395–396). Fitzmyer makes similar observations about this passage: “[Barnabas and Saul] are the chosen instruments of the Spirit, which continues to be the dynamo inaugurating the further spread of the Word of God” (*Acts*, 495). See also Johnson (*Acts*, 221 and 225), and Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 2:159 and 161). Spencer puts special emphasis on the correlation of this commission and the worship activity described here (*Acts*, 136–138).

Chapters 13–14 describe a series of encounters in which Paul and Barnabas find themselves and their message sometimes received warmly and sometimes opposed.³⁹ Although this opposition is often extreme,⁴⁰ it is overshadowed by the success of their mission. A Roman proconsul is converted in 13:12. After a successful address in a synagogue of Psidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas are invited back to speak again, and “many” Jews and proselytes follow them. When they return to speak on the following Sabbath, “nearly the whole city” turns out to hear “the word of the Lord” (13:44). Even the Jewish opposition they face (13:45) is balanced by the receptivity of the Gentiles (13:48–49). In Iconium, a great crowd of Jews and Gentiles become believers (14:1). Again, the apostles face opposition in Iconium, but the narrative highlights instead the spread of the “good news” (14:7). When Paul heals a crippled man in Lystra, the response of the Gentiles is to receive him and Barnabas as gods, attempting to offer them sacrifice as incarnations of Hermes and Zeus (14:11–12). Paul is even stoned and left for dead in 14:19, but in the next verse he simply gets up. He and Barnabas then go to Derbe, where they make a large number of disciples (14:20–21). In each case, significant opposition is matched by greater success.

Luke describes the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1–35, at the end of which Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch. After an unspecified period of time, Paul suggests a return tour: “Let us visit the brothers in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord [to see] how they are doing” (15:36).⁴¹ This is an interesting and peculiar transition in the narrative. The commission for the first journey comes directly from the Holy Spirit (13:2). Unlike the odd passage in 15:28,⁴² the Holy

³⁹ It is interesting that both the human characters and the message they bring are the objects of reception and opposition. In 13:7, Paul and Barnabas are “summoned” by Sergius. In 13:8, Bar-Jesus opposes Paul and Barnabas. In 13:42–43, Paul and Barnabas are encouraged to deliver their message again, and they are followed by Jews and proselytes. Jews oppose the message in 13:45, and incite persecution against Paul and Barnabas in 13:50.

⁴⁰ This is especially true in 14:19.

⁴¹ For those who might question the idea that this account somehow parallels the commissioning found in 13:2, Luke’s use of the particle *οὕτως* is rather overwhelming. In Acts, this particle is found only at 13:2 and 15:36. See also Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 473.

⁴² Acts 15:28 begins “for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” This inclusion of the Holy Spirit is peculiar. Some scholars have interpreted this very positively. Shepherd argues: “Here Luke presents both the Spirit and the church jointly as actors; the Spirit is directly involved in this conflict, and takes a side” (*Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit*, 218). Luke Johnson goes even further, comparing 15:28 to the

Spirit is not even added as an afterthought to this scene. Luke gives no indication of divine guidance for this return journey to parallel that found in 13:2–4. Paul is “commended to the grace of the Lord” in 15:40, but this is hardly the same as the role of the Spirit in Acts 13.⁴³ Further complications arise in the next verse.

The stated purpose of the return tour in 15:36 is to “visit the brothers in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord.” In 15:41, however, the narrator says that “[Paul] went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” In the description of the first mission, there is no mention of *any* activity in Syria (outside of Antioch), and “Cilicia” as a region is not mentioned either.⁴⁴ Instead, these would appear to refer back to the addressees of the letter mentioned in 15:23.⁴⁵ In the first journey, the sea routes traveled by the apostles obviated the need to travel through Syria at all. Even with the understanding that Paul would not follow Barnabas to Cyprus, the emphasis on a *return* trip to Syria and Cilicia is strange.

After the acquisition of Timothy in Lystra (16:1–3), the narrative takes another subtle turn, this time to the north and west—a turn for which the narrative gives no explanation.⁴⁶ Recalling again the

commissioning scene in Acts 13: “The invocation of the Holy Spirit as a partner to the decision has an odd sound to contemporary ears, but it nicely captures the dynamics of the process as portrayed by Luke. For similar language establishing an interplay between the activity of humans and of the Holy Spirit, see Acts 13:1–3” (*Acts*, 277).

The problem with such interpretations is that the narrative does *not* establish such “interplay.” Luke goes on at length about the deliberations of those gathered in Jerusalem. God and the Holy Spirit are mentioned by the characters in this scene, but the narrator never depicts God or the Holy Spirit interacting with the characters, nor do the characters themselves attempt to seek God’s guidance (e.g., through prayer).

⁴³ Haenchen’s remarks betray the peculiarity of this transition: “Paul now unfolds no new mission-plan: only the existing congregations are to be revisited. But out of this God will bring about the ‘second missionary journey’.” Luke does not say so, but that is how he presents the story” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 473).

⁴⁴ Some commentators have seen this problem, but not dwelt on it. A good example is Barrett: “Syria and Cilicia were thus new territory as far as missionary work recorded in Acts is concerned. ... but according to the present verses ἐκκλησίαι had been established by someone, since they were now *strengthened*” (*Acts*, 758). Others have passed over it: “[Paul] retraced his steps through territory already evangelized in Mission I, through areas mentioned together in 15:23” (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 574). Given their narrative interests, it is interesting that neither Tannehill nor Spencer engage this particular problem. As with other problematic passages in Acts, this discrepancy led early scholars to postulate Luke’s use of a different source for this section of the narrative (see Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 475).

⁴⁵ So also Haenchen (*Acts of the Apostles*, 475) and Barrett (*Acts*, 758).

⁴⁶ Tannehill offers an interesting discussion of this point: “developments do not

purpose of this return journey, it seems all the more odd that the reader is offered no explicit impetus for the northwesterly expansion of Paul's mission. In this context, however, the "Spiritual" hindrance Paul and company encounter is quite striking. Nowhere from 15:36 to 16:5 does Luke give any indication that God (or the Spirit) is pressing Paul into new missionary territory. Although Jesus' declaration about the disciples' testimony in Acts 1:8 does include "the ends of the earth," one might think that the expansion attempted by Paul in 16:5–8 would have been introduced in the narrative, especially given the emphasis of the Spirit's formal commission in 13:1–3. Instead, the turn in 16:5 is abrupt.

Aftermath (16:11 – 17:15)

After running into several spiritual "roadblocks" in 16:6–7, the characters treat Paul's ὄραμα as a breakthrough: they interpret this event as divine guidance for the course of their mission. They seek "immediately" (εὐθέως) to go to Macedonia, because they have concluded (συμβιβάζω) that God has called them to do so. Thus, the reader might expect breakthrough results. These expectations are heightened by the language in 16:11–12. Paul and company make rapid progress across the Aegean Sea.⁴⁷ In v. 12, they arrive at Philippi, a city to which Luke ascribes importance: "which is a prominent city of the region of Macedonia."⁴⁸ In addition, this is the only city noted as a "colony" in Luke-Acts, despite the fact that other cities mentioned in Acts 13–14 shared this status.⁴⁹ Given the tension involved in this plot transition—the hindrance of the Spirit(s) in Acts 16:6–7, the dream-vision in v. 9, the

follow Paul's plan... . Paul's attempts to expand his previous mission into neighboring areas are frustrated... . Paul's plan and God's plan do not coincide at this point. Paul must endure frustrating experiences until the moment of discovery of the new opportunity for mission. This discovery expands Paul's horizons beyond his original plans" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:194). This assessment is interesting, despite the presumption of Paul's "plan," into which the narrative gives little insight.

⁴⁷ Recall that the speed with which they make the journey is significant for Conzelmann's assessment that Paul's ὄραμα was indeed divine in origin (*Acts*, 129; see also the discussion of Conzelmann in chapter 2 above).

⁴⁸ It is interesting that Luke does not expend as much effort describing any other city in Acts. For a lengthy discussion of what this phrase might mean, see Barrett, *Acts*, 778–780.

⁴⁹ This is true, for example, of Troas, Psidian Antioch, and Lystra (Gaventa, *Acts*, 236).

interpretation of this dream-vision as a call from God in v. 10, and the description of their successful arrival in the important city of Philippi—the reader might reasonably expect that great evangelistic success will soon follow. Such expectations, however, are not fulfilled.

Unlike other areas, in which Paul and company typically find a synagogue,⁵⁰ they go outside the gates of Philippi to a place where they “think” there might be a place of prayer. Here, they encounter a group of women who have gathered. Among them is a “dealer of purple cloth” and “worshiper of God” named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira.⁵¹ Although it was a Macedonian man who appeared in Paul’s dream-vision, it is a Thyatirian woman whose heart the Lord opens to hear Paul’s message in Philippi.⁵² Luke’s language further emphasizes this inversion with the repetition of *παρακαλέω* and *λέγω*: “After she and her household had been baptized, she beseeched (*παρακαλέω*) [us], saying (*λέγω*), ‘if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay in my house’” (16:15).⁵³

If Paul’s mission in Macedonia is unremarkable up to this point,⁵⁴ things take a turn for the worse in vv. 16 through 40. In 16:16–18, the characters are confronted repeatedly by a female slave possessed

⁵⁰ See, for example, Salamis (13:5), Psidian Antioch (13:14), Iconium (14:1), Thessalonica (17:1), and Beroea (17:10).

⁵¹ Ironically, Lydia is from a city in a region where Paul and company were prevented from proclaiming the word (16:6).

⁵² Like Calvin (*Acts* 14–28, 70–71; see also the discussion in chapter 2), Spencer observes this inversion (*Acts*, 164).

⁵³ Cf. the use of this combination in Acts 16:9 (ἀνὴρ Μακεδὼν τις ἦν ἐστὼς καὶ παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγων· διαβὰς εἰς Μακεδονίαν βοήθησον ἡμῖν). On this point, Spencer remarks, “Lydia also has a brief speaking part, but the words she utters are suppliant rather than prophetic” (*Acts*, 165). To this observation, one might add the reason for Lydia’s supplication: Luke is drawing attention to this inversion through the repetition of language found in 16:9.

⁵⁴ Commentators tend to emphasize various interpretive possibilities with regard to the conversion of Lydia. On the one hand, she is a woman of means who heads a household (16:15). On the other, however, she is a πορφυρόπωλις (purple-cloth merchant). If this means she is involved in the production of purple cloth, Spencer’s comments shed an interesting light on this passage: “While suggesting a degree of wealth and independence ... Purple-dyeing was particularly stigmatized as a smelly, ‘dirty’ process involving the use of animal urine” (*Acts*, 165). Ivoni Richter Reimer’s extensive research into evidence for the dye trade in Thyatira indicates that “purple” dyeing did not necessarily imply luxury items. Nor would this profession have implied any particular wealth or high status (*Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* [trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 98–105). It is difficult to know how Luke’s original audience might have responded to Paul’s only “success” in this early stage of the Macedonian mission.

of a “Pythian” spirit. This scene contrasts nicely with Paul’s earlier encounter with the Jewish false prophet, Bar-Jesus (13:6–12). In the earlier story, Paul defeats his religious opponent, and the Roman pro-consul, Sergius Paulus, believes in the apostles’ message. This pattern does not recur in the latter account. Despite Paul’s ability to cast out the “Pythian” spirit in the name of Jesus,⁵⁵ his encounter with the Philippian authorities leads only to opposition⁵⁶ and imprisonment.⁵⁷

Whereas Acts 13–14 present the apostles encountering large groups of people, the initial stories of the Macedonian experience deal with individuals: Lydia in 16:13–15, and now the Philippian jailer. In contrast to earlier stories like Peter’s miraculous prison escape in Acts 12, it is interesting to note that this passage features neither a miracle nor an escape. After an earthquake shakes the foundations of the prison leaving the prisoners free of their bonds, the jailer finds that no one has left (16:26–29). Indeed, given the assumptions of divine agency in Paul’s dream-vision at Troas, it is interesting to notice the *absence* of divine agency in this part of Acts.⁵⁸ Paul’s prison is shaken open by an earthquake, rather than an angelic liberator.⁵⁹ Rather than believing as

⁵⁵ One significant difference between this and the encounter with Bar-Jesus is the absence of the Holy Spirit (cf. 13:9, Παῦλος, πλησθεὶς πνεύματος ἁγίου ἀτενίσας εἰς αὐτόν). This absence of divine activity will be discussed further below.

⁵⁶ Spencer notes a development from the first mission, in which “Paul had been harassed primarily by jealous Jewish religious leaders who attempted to undercut his popular appeal but never ... pressed any specific legal charges against him. Now, however, attacks come from a variety of quarters, both Jewish and Gentile, secular and religious, in the form of clear and pointed calumnies” (*Acts*, 159).

⁵⁷ Although it may be premature to declare the description of this mission as anticlimactic just yet, so too is it difficult to concur with Fitzmyer’s “triumphal” comments on this passage: “The Lucan story succeeds once again in depicting the Spirit-guided missionary efforts of Paul and his companions in an important Roman town of the eastern Mediterranean area. It is the first place evangelized by Paul in Europe. The exorcism of the possessed slave girl is used by Luke to depict the triumph of Christianity over pagan Greco-Roman practices” (*Acts*, 583).

⁵⁸ “God,” “Jesus,” and “Lord” are mentioned frequently in 16:11 – 17:15 (“God” [16:14, 17, 25, 34; 17:13], “Jesus” [16:18, 31; 17:3, 7], “Lord” [16:31–32]). (I am not including here the uses of κύριος in 16:14, 15, 16, 19, and 30, since these refer neither to God or Jesus.) With the singular exception of 16:14, however, God, Jesus, and the Lord are always the object of action rather than the subject of action.

⁵⁹ The Greek noun σεισμός is associated with the work of the Lord in a number of biblical passages (e.g., Isa 29:6; Jer 23:19; Matt 28:2). In such contexts, however, the divine connection is made explicit. This passage may also recall Luke 21:11–12, in which persecution precedes earthquakes and famine. Richard Seaford has drawn an interesting connection between language of lightning, thunder, and earthquake in

a result of an astonishing sign like Sergius Paulus (13:12), the jailer's belief is somehow motivated by the refusal of Paul and company to escape. Rulers somehow opposing God's purpose earlier in Acts have met with divine catastrophe (Acts 12:23). In this story, however, the leaders become afraid only when they hear that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens (16:38). In a mission that is redirected without explicit divine guidance in Acts 16:9–10, it is interesting to find the characters seeking to fulfill this mission in the absence of direct divine activity in 16:16–40.

In Acts 17, one finds the more familiar pattern of Acts 13–14. Paul and his companions spend several Sabbaths in the synagogue of Thessalonica. "Some of the Jews, a significant number of worshipping Greeks, and not a few of the leading women" are persuaded by Paul's message. Although this marks the greatest success since "we" left Troas, it still does not compare to descriptions like "nearly the whole city" turning out in 13:32–34. Again in 17:5, jealous Ἰουδαῖοι begin to incite persecution.⁶⁰ This time, instead of dragging Paul, Silas, and Timothy before the authorities, they persecute some of the new converts (17:6). Paul finds greater receptivity among the Jews in Beroea (17:11).⁶¹ As in 14:19, however, the opponents of Paul's message will travel to other towns to stop the spread of the word; in 17:14, Paul is whisked away to the coast. Paul's departure from Macedonia is not telegraphed in the narrative. There is no deliberation about where to go next. Luke does not even tell the reader that Paul has left Macedonia and entered Achaia.⁶² The transfer is swift (εὐθὺς), and quiet: a rather odd ending to the story that began in the tension described in 16:6–10.

Euripides *Bacchae* and Acts. Rather than textual influence, Seaford suggests that such elements were commonly reflected in rituals of initiation for so-called "mystery" cults like that of Dionysius ("Thunder, Lightning and Earthquake in the *Bacchae* and the Acts of the Apostles," in *What is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* [ed. Alan B. Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997], 139–152).

⁶⁰ Cf. Acts 13:45.

⁶¹ It is interesting that Paul finds his most receptive audience just before leaving Macedonia.

⁶² That Luke knows the distinction between the two territories becomes clear later in the narrative (cf. Acts 18:12, 27; 19:21).

Implications for the Interpretation of the Troas Episode

The larger narrative context of Acts 13–17 is replete with peculiarities and discrepancies, and scholars have suggested a number of explanations. As with other discrepancies, the source critics were quick to postulate Luke's use of a different source at each problematic turn in the narrative.⁶³ For those who have argued for the narrative unity of Acts, however, these passages pose a special problem. If one wants to argue that Luke is more than a scribe fitting together pieces of a textual puzzle, if one wants instead to argue that Luke is a skilled writer whose product is a unified narrative, then one has to work with the contours of that narrative. If the Spirit's command in Acts 13:1–3 highlights the divine guidance of the Paul's first journey, then Paul's personal decision to make another trip (15:36) must be emphasized as well. Those who would assume, along with the characters, that Paul's vision at Troas is evidence of divine guidance must also account for the lackluster success on the Macedonian mission field. More broadly, the tendency to view God as the prime mover within the plot of Luke-Acts must be balanced by an understanding of those passages in which people serve as interpreters of God's will. This is true especially of passages like 16:9, in which neither God nor a divine agent is mentioned.

Aside from the direct negative interventions of the Spirit(s) in 16:6–7, there is almost no mention of divine activity in the narration of Acts 15:36 – 17:14. The return tour initiated in 15:36 lacks the impetus of the Spirit found in 13:2. Despite scholarly arguments to the contrary, Paul's dream-vision at Troas does *not* provide this missing divine initiation. Instead, the characters are left to interpret Paul's experience. Their theological interpretation is immediate (εὐθέως [16:10]), but the events that follow do not support what the characters initially see as a divinely-guided breakthrough. Indeed, the conversions of Lydia and the Philippian jailer that occupy the rest of Acts 16 are rather anticlimactic given the enthusiasm with which the characters treat Paul's experience in 16:10. The narrative of Acts does not disclose another direct revelation from the Lord until 18:9–10, in which Paul is told to stay where he is (Corinth).

How, then, is the reader to understand the theological import of Paul's visionary encounter at Troas and of the larger context of Acts

⁶³ See, for example, Haenchen's discussion of Acts 15:41 (*Acts of the Apostles*, 475).

15:36 – 17:15? As noted above, the answer to this question should be sought within the narrative itself; it should not be assumed or supplied. In Acts 16:9–10, Luke describes a dream-vision appearing to Paul in Troas in the wake of several frustrating mission experiences. Luke's unique language of the Spirit(s) hindering Paul and company underscores the lack of any divine agent in Paul's dream-vision. Despite this lack of divine agency, the characters interpret this experience as a call to proclaim the good news to the Macedonians in 16:10. Indeed, this *interpretation* is extremely important. The characters draw their own conclusion (συμβιβάζω) about Paul's experience. In a text like Luke-Acts that focuses so often on God's action, it is important to be sensitive to those passages that do not. This section of Acts begins with a human decision (15:36), describes a transition based on human interpretation (16:10), and continues in a rather anticlimactic way until Paul quietly leaves Macedonia (17:15). Although Luke certainly wants to show God's role in the shaping of the early church and the dramatic impact of early evangelism, he also shows human decisions, interpretations, and lackluster missionary success. When one focuses too much on the divine side Luke's story, one misses the fullness of Luke's message. Part of appreciating that fullness includes understanding the relationship between visionary experiences and the characters' perception of God's will throughout Luke-Acts.

The present discussion emphasizes the underwhelming nature of the mission in Macedonia. One may rightly ask, therefore, whether this reading of Acts 16:6–10 suggests that the characters' interpretation was wrong. The present reading, however, would emphasize that such evaluations are unhelpful. The point is not whether the characters interpret Paul's dream-vision experience correctly. The point is that they *have to interpret* Paul's experience. This portion of Luke's narrative describes distinctly human elements of the early church and its development, and it invites the reader to pay closer attention to other passages in the Lukan narrative that may also emphasize human perception of God's will—especially when that perception is related to visionary encounters. The final two chapters of this study, therefore, turn to a broader examination of the dream-visions in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER FOUR

DREAM-VISIONS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The Gospel of Luke contains a variety of vision scenes. In terms of character perception and response, the visionary material in Luke 1 is the most complicated. The visions themselves contain striking announcements from the angel Gabriel and immediate reactions to his message. These scenes also have broader implications for the narrative, as Zechariah and Mary continue to engage and interpret their visionary experiences long after Gabriel's departure. Voiced most notably in the Magnificat and Benedictus, these interpretations represent a level of character filtration¹ that is unparalleled in the rest of the Gospel. Perhaps even more significant, these filtered interpretations establish certain expectations that are not fulfilled within the narrative. Both Zechariah and Mary understand their encounters with Gabriel as signs of impending change within the spheres of human power and authority. In Luke 1:52, Mary describes God as one who "overthrew rulers from their thrones." Likewise, Zechariah speaks of "salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us" in Luke 1:71. Such cataclysmic changes in human power and authority, however, do not take place in Luke's story. These unfulfilled expectations, therefore, call into question the reliability or fallibility of these character filters. Arguments have been made for and against questioning the reliability of these characters.² It is helpful to complicate this issue by examining Luke's infancy narrative in light of Shadi Bartsch's work on the use of dreams in the ancient novel.³ Such a comparison redirects attention away from the reliability of the character filter and toward the way ancient authors sometimes used the *mis*interpretation of dreams to create surprising plot twists. The present study will argue that Luke uses the misinterpretations of Zechariah and Mary both to portray common expectations of the coming Davidic messiah and to demonstrate the ways in which Jesus' actual ministry re-appropriated and reshaped these expectations.

¹ See the discussion of character filter in the introduction (pp. 17–18).

² See, for example, the discussion of Tannehill and Green below under the sub-heading "The Question of Expectations and Fulfillment."

³ See the description of Bartsch's work in chapter 1 (p. 26 above).

The other dream-visions in Luke are somewhat less complicated. The shepherds' reaction to their angelic experience in Luke 2, for example, contrasts sharply with the complex of visionary experiences and interpretations found in Luke 1. After the angel declares the news of Jesus' birth, the shepherds accept the message without hesitation or faltering. The other visionary scenes comprised in the Gospel (Jesus' baptism [3:21–22], the temptation [4:1–13], the transfiguration [9:29–36], the enigmatic vision of Satan's fall [10:18], the angelic visitation on the Mount of Olives [22:43–44], and the experience of the women at the empty tomb [24:4–7]) fall somewhere between these two extremes, manifesting a variety of perceptions and interpretations.

For practical reasons, this treatment of all the dream-visions in Luke will not include the kind of extensive narrative analysis found in chapter 3. The visions of the infancy narrative will occupy the bulk of this chapter, because they are the most complicated and have the farthest-reaching implications for Luke's story. In each case, the present study will examine the salient features of the dream-vision and its role in Luke's narrative. Since this study addresses the relationship between visions and the perception of God's will, special attention will be devoted to the reaction and response of characters to their visionary experience.

The Infancy Narrative

As noted above, the vision scenes in Luke's infancy narrative are unusual both in length and importance. From a narratological perspective, one way to measure this importance is to examine the influence of these visions on the rest of the narrative. Unlike the more isolated dream-visions later in the Gospel, the visions in the first chapter present interwoven layers of experience. The same figure, Gabriel, appears to both Zechariah and Mary, and delivers a birth announcement to each. Both Zechariah and Mary then respond with words and actions that indicate their interpretations of the messages they have received. These words and actions offer the reader an opportunity to see how Zechariah and Mary filter their visionary experiences.⁴ Their filtered perception, in

⁴ As will become clear, I am deeply indebted both to Robert Tannehill's study, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, and to Joel B. Green's commentary on Luke's Gospel (*The Gospel of Luke* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1997]). It is impor-

turn, establishes specific expectations for what is to come—expectations

tant, therefore, to note at the outset this area where I disagree perhaps most strongly with their similar views. In his introduction to the infancy narrative, Green has suggested: “From a narratological point of view the interpretive spotlight should shine brightest on the primary actor who follows an aim and who must marshal [*sic*] the necessary forces to achieve that aim. Who is the primary actor? *Clearly God is this actor*. Luke 1:5 – 2:52 introduces God, who is out to fulfill his redemptive purpose, while other characters are introduced as persons with whom and through whom God’s aim will be advanced” (*Gospel of Luke*, 50). In his discussion of the Magnificat, Tannehill makes the related claim: “It is finally the plan or purpose of God which gives shape and meaning to the story of Jesus and his witnesses. To this extent God functions as a character in the plot, though hidden from human view. We should pay close attention, then, to any disclosures of God’s purpose and to the way in which God is characterized within the story. One of the important functions of the Magnificat is to provide an initial characterization of the God whose purpose shapes the following story” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:29).

To be sure, Luke-Acts is, first and foremost, a story about God. I would argue, however, that it is important to distinguish between what the *narrator* says about God and what *characters* say about God. In the discussion that follows, I will suggest that the interpretations of both Mary and Zechariah establish expectations that must be reshaped in the course of Luke’s narrative. This is not a problem in and of itself. It is a problem, however, if the reader fails to distinguish between the narrator’s characterizations of God and the characterizations made by characters like Zechariah and Mary, who attribute actions to God that are not carried out in the story.

The second problem with these assessments is that they highlight God’s role in a way that would seem to eclipse the role of human characters in Luke’s story. If this story is primarily about God, it is nevertheless told from the perspective of human encounters with God. Just as the narrative is almost always clear about the points at which God breaks into human experience, so it also discloses the ways in which human characters understand and interpret this irruption. Sometimes they understand and interpret correctly, sometimes they do not. Closer to my own view is the narrative-critical examination of Mark Coleridge (*The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1–2* [JSNTSSup 88; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993]). At the heart of Luke’s narrative, Coleridge argues, is both the divine visitation and human recognition (or lack of recognition) of that visitation (p. 22 and *passim*). An example of what Coleridge regards as “recognition” and its importance for the narrative is found in one of his comments on Luke 1:39–56: “Now the narrator turns to the ground and effects of faith. For the first time in the infancy narrative, the initiative passes to a human character. . . . Faith therefore appears for the first time as the engine of the plot: it makes the story and helps stir the act of interpretation which the episode will recount” (76). The primary points on which I differ from Coleridge are the assumptions that Mary and Zechariah interpret their visionary experiences correctly, and that the involvement of the Holy Spirit somehow guarantees “correct” interpretation. On the issue of the Holy Spirit and “correct” interpretation, Coleridge suggests of Luke 1:42 that the Holy Spirit “comes at a point where Elizabeth offers her own interpretation of the sign of Mary’s coming. . . . the Holy Spirit represents heaven’s intervention in the process of human recognition to enable a character to interpret rightly signs which would otherwise be impenetrable” (83, and see also 87). My understanding of interaction with the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is discussed more fully below (p. 120 n. 28).

that must be reshaped in the course of the narrative.⁵ This section will examine each of these layers.

Zechariah's Vision

The Appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah (Luke 1:8–20)

8 Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἱερατεῦειν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ τάξει τῆς ἐφημερίας αὐτοῦ ἐναντι τοῦ θεοῦ, 9 κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἱερατείας ἔλαχε τοῦ θυμᾶσαι εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ κυρίου, 10 καὶ πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος ἦν τοῦ λαοῦ προσευχόμενον ἔξω τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ θυμᾶματος. 11 ὤφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐστῶς ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ θυμᾶματος. 12 καὶ ἐταράχθη Ζαχαρίας ἰδὼν καὶ φόβος ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ' αὐτόν. 13 εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ ἄγγελος· μὴ φοβοῦ, Ζαχαρία, διότι εἰσηκούσθη ἡ δέησίς σου, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ σου Ἐλισάβετ γεννήσει υἱόν σοι καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννην. 14 καὶ ἔσται χαρὰ σοι καὶ ἀγαλλίασις καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπὶ τῇ γενέσει αὐτοῦ χαρήσονται. 15 ἔσται γὰρ μέγας ἐνώπιον [τοῦ] κυρίου, καὶ οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πίῃ, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, 16

⁵ The expectations established by the words of Mary and Zechariah are paramount in this discussion. These characters interpret their visionary experiences to mean that God has enacted certain reversals and is about to redeem Israel. The language of these interpretations is scriptural, drawing on a number of promises in the OT and declaring their fulfillment. These interpretations, however, emphasize reversals within the spheres of human power and authority that do not occur in the remainder of the story. Since this study focuses on the relationship between visions and the perception of God's will, it stands to reason that character perceptions differing from the outcome of the story bring into stark relief a contrast between those perceptions and the will of God as described more fully in the narrative.

There is no question that Luke's infancy narrative does set up certain expectations for the rest of the story. Green's extensive comments on the subject provide a good starting point for this discussion: "Luke's birth narrative fosters a keen sense of anticipation and leads the reader to assume that those expectations will be fulfilled *in the narrative*. ... so that the reader reaches the end of Luke 2 with heightened expectations, ready to turn the page to see how these possibilities will be realized... . Narrative beginnings open up possibilities, inviting their audience to a full hearing or reading to discover its outcome. Luke accomplishes this not so much by holding back what will happen; angelic and prophetic voices repeatedly address this question. Rather, the reader is left to wonder *how* these far-reaching visions of redemption will come to fruition" (*Gospel of Luke*, 49 and 52).

What does not come across clearly, and what is most difficult to grasp about Luke's infancy narrative, is just how the reader is supposed to reconcile the unfulfilled social and political expectations that arise from the interpretations of Zechariah and Mary. It will be necessary, therefore, to examine the disjuncture between various kinds of power in Luke's story—especially between power as it is understood in the sphere of human authority and power in a broader cosmic perspective. These issues are discussed further under the subheading "The Question of Expectations and Fulfillment" below.

καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψει ἐπὶ κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν. 17 καὶ αὐτὸς προελεύσεται ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ δυνάμει Ἥλιου, ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων, ἐτοιμάσαι κυρίῳ λαὸν κατεσκευασμένον. 18 καὶ εἶπεν Ζαχαρίας πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον κατὰ τί γνώσομαι τοῦτο; ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἡ γυνή μου προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῆς. 19 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἐγὼ εἰμι Γαβριὴλ ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπεστάλην λαλῆσαι πρὸς σέ καὶ εὐαγγελίσασθαί σοι ταῦτα· 20 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔσθι σιωπῶν καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος λαλῆσαι ἄχρι ἥς ἡμέρας γένηται ταῦτα, ἀνθ' ὧν οὐκ ἐπίστευσας τοῖς λόγοις μου, οἵτινες πληρωθήσονται εἰς τὸν καιρὸν αὐτῶν.

8 While [Zechariah] was serving as a priest in the succession of his order before God, 9 he was appointed, according to the custom of priestly service, to enter the Temple of the Lord and perform the incense offering. 10 The whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. 11 An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12 Seeing this, Zechariah was shaken and fear fell upon him. 13 The angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer was heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son for you, and you will call him John. 14 You will have joy and exultation, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 He will be great before the Lord. He will never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be full of the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. 16 He will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children—even the disobedient in the wisdom of the righteous, to prepare a people ready for the Lord.” 18 Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know this, for I am old and my wife is advanced in her days?” 19 The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel,⁶ the one who stands before God. I was sent to speak

⁶ The appearance of Gabriel here and in Luke 1:26–38 is unique in the Lukan narrative. Luke refers to angels frequently in dream-vision passages (e.g., Luke 2:9; Acts 5:19, 8:26, and 10:3), but they are elsewhere unnamed. For a discussion of “angel of the Lord” and “angel of God” as expressions “God” in the OT, see Raymond Brown (*The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* [rev. ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 260) and Joseph Fitzmyer (*The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [2 vols.; AB 28–28A; New York: Doubleday, 1981–1985], 1:324); both suggest that Luke’s convention of providing a name for this angel, and thus making it a personal intermediary, is in line with Pharisaic beliefs.) It has been common to connect Luke’s inclusion of Gabriel to similar references in Dan 8–9, and there is no reason to argue against this assumption. One must note, however, that Gabriel is found in a number of pseudepigraphical texts as well (e.g., *1 En.* 9:1, 10:9, and 20:7; *L.A.E.* (Apocalypse) 40:2; and *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 2:1, 4:7, 6:2). Gabriel’s role in *1 Enoch*, in particular, bears some similarity to Luke’s usage. In *1 En.* 9, Gabriel, along with Michael and Surafel, laments suffering and oppression on earth and entreats God on behalf of humanity. God sends Gabriel to carry out certain orders on earth in *1 En.* 10:9. Indeed, Gabriel’s function as God’s agent in *1 Enoch* is perhaps more similar to the role he plays in Luke 1 than is the specifically interpretive role played in Daniel. Both

to you and to proclaim this good news to you. 20 Behold you will be silent, unable to speak until the day these things happen, because you did not believe my words—words which will be fulfilled in their time.”⁷

Before a word is spoken, the narrative describes Zechariah’s initial reaction to the appearance of Gabriel: “Zechariah was shaken and fear fell upon him” (1:12).⁸ Fear is not an uncommon response to visionary experiences, nor is Gabriel’s response that Zechariah should not be afraid (1:13).⁹ What is interesting here is the lack of correlation between the content of the vision and Zechariah’s response. This is the longest

Brown and Nolland suggest a much stronger link to Daniel, but neither offers much argument for the preference (Brown, *Birth*, 270–271; John Nolland, *Luke* [3 vols.; Word; Dallas: Word Books, 1989–1993] 1:35). More compelling is Nolland’s suggestion that the mention of Gabriel would evoke images of the eschaton (*Luke*, 1:35). This would be true regardless of which Gabriel tradition Luke is adducing.

⁷ Robert Gnuse has compared this passage with the “Temple theophanies” of Jaddus and Hyrcanus in the writing of Josephus (*Ant.* 11.326–328 and 13.282–283, respectively), suggesting that Luke and Josephus may both be using a “common narrative tradition” (“The Temple Theophanies of Jaddus, Hyrcanus, and Zechariah,” *Bib* 79 [1998]: 457–472). Unfortunately, these stories share only rudimentary similarities (i.e., each occurs in the Temple and features some sort of revelation from God). This limits the usefulness of such a comparison.

⁸ The verb *ταράσσω* also has the figurative connotation of “trouble, disturb, or unsettle” (BDAG, s.v. “*ταράσσω*”), but the more literal “shaken” provides an even more striking figurative image. Given the unquestionable connection between Zechariah’s response in 1:18 and the story of Abram in Gen 15 (see below), it is interesting to note that the first three occurrences of *ταράσσω* in the LXX come in dream-vision contexts (Gen 19:16, 40:6, and 41:8). As Nolland observes, *ταράσσω* is also used in Tob 12:16 to describe the reaction to the appearance of the angel Raphael (*Luke*, 1:29).

⁹ In OT vision reports, for example, people sometimes respond with fear (e.g., Daniel [Dan 10:8]). Whether fear is a “common” response to visionary experiences is a more elusive question. (*Contra* Brown’s suggestion regarding the form of the “Biblical Annunciations of Birth” [*Birth*, 156 and 260] and Green’s assertion that “Zechariah’s fearful response is expected in this [visionary] context” [*Gospel of Luke*, 72]. Both Brown and Green cite a number of examples supporting this claim, but one could cite as many or more that do not [e.g., Hagar in Gen 16:7–14; Abraham in Gen 22:11; Moses in Exod 3:2ff.—it is interesting that the Hebrew of Exod 3:6 says Moses “was afraid” (אָרָא) to look upon God, whereas the Greek suggests that he is too reverent (εὐλαβέομαι) to do so; Zechariah in Zech 1:8–17].) A number of Luke’s characters respond fearfully (e.g., Zechariah [Luke 1:12], Mary [Luke 1:29], the shepherds [Luke 2:9], the women at the empty tomb [Luke 24:5]). Later in the narrative, however, it is equally interesting to find characters *not* showing fear in light of similar experiences (e.g., the gathering at Pentecost [Acts 2:1–4]; Peter during his miraculous escape from jail [Acts 12:6–17]). This may indicate some form of development between the Gospel and Acts, and will be treated more in chapter 5. In any case, summary conclusions suggesting that “fear is the *standard reaction* to the presence of the divine” are misleading (Nolland, *Luke*, 1:29 [emphasis mine]). Even more unqualified summaries like that of Jacob Kremer tend to oversimplify: “‘Furcht’ und Erschrecken sind in der Bibel fast immer die Reaktion

description of a dream-vision in all of Luke-Acts. Gabriel not only declares that Zechariah and Elizabeth will have a child, but goes on to describe the significant work their son will accomplish.¹⁰ Given this lengthy description, Zechariah's reaction to this message is somewhat puzzling. Unlike Manoah in Judges 13, for example, Zechariah does not engage what Gabriel has said about his coming son.¹¹ Instead, he asks, "How will I know this?" Doubtful reception of dream-visions was common in both Jewish and non-Jewish texts of the Graeco-Roman period, but the answer to Zechariah's inquiry seems fairly obvious. This question becomes more meaningful when one observes that it is a quotation of Gen 15:8.¹² Luke, therefore, depicts Zechariah's doubtful response to his visionary experience in the language of Abram.¹³ Zechariah's verbal

der Menschen auf die Begegnung mit dem Überirdischen" (*Lukasevangelium* [NEchtB 3; Würzburg: Echter, 1988], 25).

Form-critical analyses may be somewhat helpful in answering this question. In Hanson's "Dreams and Visions," for example, a fearful response is not included as part of the common "form" of dream-vision report. Perhaps more interesting is the fact that a fearful response is not included as a part of J. Kenneth Kuntz's list of formal elements of the OT theophanic *Gattung*, but the "quelling of human fear" is included; Kuntz outlines the basic elements of the theophanic *Gattung* as: "Introductory description"; "Divine self-asseveration"; "Quelling of human fear"; "Assertion of gracious divine presence"; "*Hieros logos*"; "Concluding description" (*Self-revelation of God*, 59–60 and 65–67). More than likely, this oddity in Kuntz's analysis is based on the repeated presence of statements like "fear not" in theophanic texts, even when there is no previous indication of fear (e.g., Gen 15:1 and 26:24).

¹⁰ François Bovon makes an interesting suggestion here: "To make this epiphany on the threshold of the new age comprehensible, Luke employs a common Jewish topos, the proclamation of an extraordinary birth to a childless couple... The proclamation of such births was, in the Hebrew Bible, always an expression of initiative on the part of the saving God; in each case the saving event happened for the good not only of individuals but of the whole nation" (*Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* [trans. Christine M. Thomas; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002], 34).

¹¹ See Judg 13:12–14.

¹² The wording of the question, κατὰ τί γινώσκειν, is stylistically poor. This language, however, provides excellent evidence for Luke's use of a Greek translation of Genesis (see also Brown, *Birth*, 279). This phrase is so awkward that it is used nowhere else in the corpus of Greek literature. A search of the *TLG* indicates that the phrase is found only in Gen 15:8, Luke 1:18, and patristic quotations of these passages. In light of the extant sources, this was not a phrase that Luke would have picked up elsewhere, nor one that he would have been likely to create on his own. Here, there should be no question that Luke is appropriating the language of Gen 15:8.

¹³ The similarities and differences between the theophany to Abram in Gen 15 and this passage are striking. Both stories focus on the question of righteousness and faith. In Gen 15:6, Abram's faith (πιστεύω) is regarded as righteousness (δικαιοσύνη). In Luke 1:6, both Zechariah and Elizabeth are declared to be righteous (δίκαιος), but it is Zechariah's unbelief (οὐκ ἐπίστευσας) that Gabriel emphasizes as the reason for

response is cut off by Gabriel, who is quick to assert his own authority¹⁴ and announce the punishment for Zechariah's initial doubt: Zechariah will be mute until these things take place (Luke 1:20).¹⁵

This punishment is unusual in the story of Luke-Acts.¹⁶ Zechariah is not the only figure to express doubt in the midst of a visionary experience. Mary and Peter both do the same,¹⁷ but Zechariah is the only one punished.¹⁸ For the present discussion, it is important to note

his punishment in Luke 1:20. There is doubt in both visionary encounters, but the object of their respective doubt differs. After Abram's initial outburst about his lack of an heir (Gen 15:2–3), he accepts the Lord's reply that his descendants will be like the stars of heaven (15:4–5). Indeed, it is Abram's belief in this promise that is regarded as righteousness. The phrase that connects these two passages, κατὰ τὴν γνώσκειν, is not uttered by Abram until the Lord mentions the land inheritance in 15:7. In the Lukan passage, Zechariah uses this language to respond to Gabriel's promise of a child. See also Coleridge (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 37–38). Green offers a parallel presentation suggesting the remarkable points of contact between Luke's infancy narrative and the stories of Abraham and Sarah in Gen 11–22 (*Gospel of Luke*, 53–55).

¹⁴ For similar language describing certain angels as “standing before God,” see Tob 12:15 and *T. Ab.* 7:11; see also Dan 7:16.

¹⁵ Brown argued against the identification of this action as punishment: “In giving the sign the angel explicitly recalls the Daniel background of the annunciation by identifying himself as Gabriel ... and ... the sign of being struck mute echoes Dan 10:15. The recognition of the extent to which Luke is following a stereotyped pattern and an OT background makes otiose the question of whether Zechariah's punishment was just” (*Birth*, 280). There are two significant problems with this assessment. First, Daniel's silence in Dan 10:15 is a reaction to his vision, rather than a silence that is imposed upon him. Indeed, Daniel speaks again in the next verse. More important, overemphasis on this possible parallel ignores the narrative description of the event in the Gospel. In Luke 1:20, Gabriel declares: “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things come to pass, *because* (ὅτι) ὅτι you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” Luke employs the phrase ὅτι ὅτι four times in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:20; 12:3; 19:44; Acts 12:23). In each of these passages, the prepositional phrase expresses either a causal relationship or a sequential relationship between actions and results. In two of the other three passages (Luke 19:44 and Acts 12:23), it is used in the distinctive sense of giving a reason for punishment. See also Bovon, *Luke 1*, 39. Warren Carter acknowledges the punishment in v. 20, but also suggests: “the subsequent narrative reinterprets this silence without reference to punishment. The silence functions as a sign to the waiting congregation that something wonderful has happened (v. 22)” (“Zechariah and the Benedictus [1, 68–79]: Practicing What He Preaches,” *Bib* 69 [1988]: 241).

¹⁶ Kremer, however, regards this more generally as a “punishment miracle,” and suggests connections with the stories of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1–10) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:11 [*Lukasevangelium*, 26]).

¹⁷ Cf. Luke 1:34 and Acts 10:17.

¹⁸ Fitzmyer regards this as a “punitive miracle” (*Gospel According to Luke*, 1:328). Gail O'Day contrasts Gabriel's statement that Zechariah did not believe (Luke 1:21) with Elizabeth's statement in 1:45 that Mary has believed (“Singing Woman's Song: A Hermeneutic of Liberation,” *CurTM* 12 [1985]: 206–207); this is interesting, but

both that Zechariah responds with doubt, and that this doubt proves to be unacceptable to the heavenly intermediary.¹⁹ Zechariah's response to his vision is suspended abruptly in 1:19 and does not resume until 1:64, where doubt turns to effusive praise of God.²⁰ In comparison with

it requires that one ignore Mary's own reaction in 1:34 and skip immediately to Elizabeth's exclamation in 1:45. Schürmann also presumes the statement of Mary's belief in 1:45, and suggests that Mary's reaction in 1:34 is merely an indication of extreme surprise rather than doubt (*Lukasevangelium*, 1:49). Bovon asserts that Mary's words in this verse "express questioning belief and are therefore legitimate," but offers no support for this claim (*Luke* 1, 51). Tannehill observes that Zechariah is being punished, but does not offer a reason for the difference in Gabriel's response to Mary (*Narrative Unity*, 1:15). Green offers a more speculative suggestion: "One can also distinguish between Zechariah's request for a sign ('How will I know?') and Mary's request for an explanation ('How can this be?'). The reader has seen God's miraculous work with Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Mary has become the recipient of God's grace, so neither we nor she entertains any doubt that the angel's words can be realized" (*Gospel of Luke*, 89). Such speculation is not particularly satisfying. Indeed, the danger in this speculation is that it eradicates the possibility of "doubt" in Luke 1:34—an eradication for which there are no grounds in the narrative. More helpful is Green's observation that the point of this question is rhetorical: "her question plays a vital theological role, for it accents the fact that she is still a virgin" (*Gospel of Luke*, 89). The rhetorical function of Mary's question has been similarly noted by Gaventa (*Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* [Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995], 53). Also acknowledging this device, Coleridge argues: "Mary needs to know more if the comparison with Zechariah's unbelief and Mary's eventual belief is to work convincingly" (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 62). Unfortunately, Coleridge eventually attempts to create more differences between the reactions of Zechariah and Mary than the narrative may warrant (64–65, 69).

More satisfying is Coleridge's explanation of Zechariah's punishment. He suggests that Abram's question is less abrasive because the vision in Gen 15 describes an unprecedented event. Zechariah, however, demands a sign in response to a promise that is not unprecedented, and should be accepted by faith. Furthermore, there is an irony involved in Zechariah's question/quotation: it "implies that Zechariah knows the Scripture. . . he mouths the words of Abraham [*sic*], but fails to remember the events of the biblical story which would answer the question. . . . What has also emerged in Zechariah's reply is that he has been left free enough to balk at faith and demand a knowledge which might substitute for it" (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 38–40). Corresponding to this, Mary "does not use the words of Abraham but . . . does share his faith" (93). For Coleridge, both faith and interpretation are crucial: "God's visitation, insofar as it is promise, demands faith. . . . God's visitation, insofar as it is fulfilment, demands a right interpretation of ambiguous signs" (99).

¹⁹ As Coleridge observes: "In having Gabriel insist that the divine plan will unfold as promised despite Zechariah's failure, the narrator has shown how the divine plan is not thwarted by human doubt. It has its own dynamic of necessity. In that sense, God is shown to be one who seeks human acceptance of his plan, but does not depend upon it" (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 49).

²⁰ It is important, however, to note the skillful way in which Luke subtly connects the two episodes. Verse 22 provides an interesting adumbration of the story of John's

the imposition of silence in 1:19,²¹ Zechariah is described as being filled with the Holy Spirit²² and prophesying in 1:67.²³

The Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79)²⁴

68 Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν
λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ, 69 καὶ ἤγειρεν κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῖν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυίδ
παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, 70 καθὼς ἐλάλησεν διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ’ αἰῶνος

birth later in the chapter. Because he was unable to speak as he left the Temple, the people somehow “knew that he had seen a vision (ὄπτασία) in the Temple”; Zechariah then begins “gesturing” (διανεύω) to them. After Elizabeth asserts that the baby is to be named John (in accordance with Gabriel’s address in 1:13), the people gathered motion (ἐννεύω) to Zechariah for his opinion (1:62). The deliberate connection being drawn between these two passages is supported by the fact that these related verbs appear only here in the New Testament. See also the treatment of Coleridge (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 109).

²¹ Walter Grundmann notes the irony in Zechariah’s punishment: he is punished because of his lack of faith, but, at the same time, the imposition of silence serves as an immediate sign that what Gabriel says will come to pass. The punishment for Zechariah’s lack of faith becomes a sign that can inspire his faith (*Das Evangelium nach Lukas* [THKNT 3; Berlin: Evangelische, 1961], 53).

²² A number of studies have attempted to assess the role and significance of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. G.W.H. Lampe’s essay, “The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke,” remains significant (in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot* [ed. D.E. Nineham; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955], 159–200). More recently, a few scholars have argued various points of Lukan pneumatology (see especially Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* [JSNTSS 54; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991]; Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]; and John Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997]). For the most part, these recent works argue for a specific, overarching role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts (e.g., as the inspirer of prophetic speech or the initiator of mission). The present study will offer a different perspective, sketched in several of the footnotes below.

²³ Luke’s use of the verb προφητεύω is fairly limited. It is not used again until the mocking of Jesus in Luke 22:64. It occurs only four times in Acts, two of which are part of a quotation from Joel (Acts 2:17–18). Believers in Ephesus are described as receiving the Holy Spirit and prophesying in Acts 19:6. Finally, the verb is used to characterize Philip’s four prophesying daughters (Acts 21:9). Luke’s use of the verb here is all the more interesting given Schürmann’s interpretation of Gabriel’s role earlier in Luke 1. Schürmann suggests that the announcement of the angel Gabriel essentially trumps earlier prophetic promises in the course of fulfilling them: “Nicht mehr ein Prophetenwort gibt hier Verheißung, vielmehr sagt nun ein apokalyptisches Engelwort die Erfüllung aller prophetischen Verheißungen an” (*Lukasevangelium*, 1:32).

²⁴ In this discussion, I normally follow the chronology of Luke’s narrative. Because the Benedictus provides the primary insight into Zechariah’s response to his visionary experience, however, I have chosen to discuss these two passages together.

προφητῶν αὐτοῦ, 71 σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς πάντων τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς, 72 ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ μνησθῆναι διαθήκης ἁγίας αὐτοῦ, 73 ὅρκον ὃν ὤμοσεν πρὸς Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν, τοῦ δοῦναι ἡμῖν 74 ἀφόβως ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ὀυσθέντας λατρεῦειν αὐτῷ 75 ἐν ὁσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ πάσαις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν. 76 Καὶ σὺ δέ, παιδίον, προφήτης ὑψίστου κληθήσῃ· προπορεύσῃ γὰρ ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ, 77 τοῦ δοῦναι γνώσιν σωτηρίας τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν, 78 διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ἐν οἷς ἐπισκέπεται ἡμᾶς ἀνατολή ἐξ ὕψους, 79 ἐπιφάναι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένους, τοῦ κατευθῆναι τοὺς πόδας ἡμῶν εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης.

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably upon, and made redemption for, his people. 69 He raised a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 just as he spoke through the mouths of the holy prophets of old—71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 He has shown mercy to our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant, 73 an oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham. He allows us 74 to worship him without fear, having been rescued from the hand of the enemy—75 to live in holiness and righteousness before him all of our days. 76 And you, my child, will be called the prophet of the Most High. For you will go out before the Lord to prepare his paths, 77 to give the knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins. 78 Through the heartfelt compassion of our God the dawn from on high will shine²⁵ upon us, 79 to cast light upon those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet to the path of peace.

Both the story time and narrative time²⁶ separating Gabriel's announcement from Zechariah's proclamation²⁷ are significant. At least nine months and more than forty verses stand between the two events. Zechariah's response to his visionary experience, therefore, comes only

²⁵ This is a figurative attempt to render ἐπισκέπτομαι in a way that is consistent with the subject, ἀνατολή. It would be preferable, of course, if one could keep the sense of "look favorably upon" to maintain the thread that begins in v. 68.

²⁶ In simplest terms, "story time" refers to the temporal nature of the events being described. "Narrative time" refers to the temporal nature of a narrative description (Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 33). That is, "story time" refers to temporal descriptions in the story (e.g., "and Mary remained with her for three months" [Luke 1:56]). "Narrative time" refers to the amount of the narrative devoted to describing a particular event.

²⁷ Carter has observed that the Benedictus functions as an address on two levels. It is addressed as praise to God, but it is also serves as proclamation. This latter function is highlighted by Luke's use of the verb προφητεύω, a verb used elsewhere in Luke-Acts (Luke 22:64; Acts 2:17–18; 19:6; 21:9) in relation to human audiences ("Zechariah and the Benedictus," 242–243).

after a considerable amount of suspense. Within this response, Zechariah filters Gabriel's grand pronouncement in such a way that it reflects even grander expectations.²⁸ Zechariah does not merely reit-

²⁸ In order to discuss the Benedictus as Zechariah's filtered response to his visionary experience in Luke 1:13–17, one must reconcile the idea that the Benedictus serves as Zechariah's interpretation of his experience with the explicit narrative cue in v. 67 that Zechariah's proclamation comes at a moment when he is "filled with the Holy Spirit." What is really at issue here is the question of what it means in the narrative for a character to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to prophesy. It has already been noted that Luke's makes only minimal use of the verb προφητεύω (see note 23). It is difficult, therefore, to argue conclusively about Luke's understanding of prophecy. Luke's references to the Spirit, however, are far more numerous. (Luke contains more references to the Spirit than any other gospel, and the Spirit is mentioned more in Acts than in Matthew, Mark, and John combined.)

But what does it mean when Luke says that a character is "filled with the Holy Spirit." Certainly, it indicates an interaction between the human character and the divine, but how is the reader to understand this interaction? To what extent are the actions of Spirit-filled characters their own, and to what extent have their actions become the actions of the divine Spirit? Do Spirit-filled characters become puppets in the hand of God? Lampe has suggested that the Holy Spirit is "the mode of God's self-manifestation" in Luke-Acts ("Holy Spirit," 161). Green's comments are similar, and even more graphic: "the filling of the Holy Spirit was often for the purpose of prophecy, so that the prophet would be recognized as providing God's perspective on events. Under the direction of the Spirit, Zechariah communicates from the divine point of view the significance of the extraordinary events narrated thus far... . Hence, from Luke's perspective, it is not a question of what Zechariah could or could not have possibly known. Endowed with the Spirit he now shares, however temporarily, *in the all-knowing perspective of the narrator and of God*" (*Gospel of Luke*, 115 and n. 31; emphasis mine). This interpretation would make it difficult to argue that Zechariah is interpreting his own visionary experience in the Benedictus. I would suggest, however, that the role of the Spirit is far more fluid in the Lukan narrative, and that certain nuances of the Spirit's activity allow more flexibility in understanding the human side of this interaction.

In Luke 1:15, Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son will be filled with the Holy Spirit "from his mother's womb." The interaction between Elizabeth and Mary emphasizes this claim, as the unborn John recognizes the greeting of the mother of the Lord (Luke 1:41–43). Despite all of this, John must later send messengers to ask Jesus whether he is the one who is coming, or whether they should be waiting for another (7:19). This lack of insight would suggest that John is still very human, despite his Spirit-filled ministry and destiny as the one who "will go out before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah" (1:17).

Perhaps even more illuminating are the depictions of Spirit-led believers in Acts 19–21. In Acts 19:21, Paul "resolves in the Spirit" to go to Jerusalem. Paul communicates this understanding of the Spirit's guidance in his address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:22–23. When Paul and his companions arrive in Tyre, however, believers tell him "through the Spirit" *not* to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:3–4). This conflicting presentation of the Spirit's guidance is reinforced by the message of Agabus later in Acts 21:10–14. These scenes present believers who are led by the Spirit, but who understand the Spirit's guidance in radically different ways.

erate what Gabriel promised in 1:13–17. Instead, he interprets Gabriel’s message, viewing the events surrounding his son’s birth as an indication of imminent salvation—salvation that will include dynamic changes in the existing human power structures²⁹—and viewing his son as the harbinger of this salvation.

Gabriel’s announcement focuses on John’s birth as an answer to prayer (1:13), on the joy his birth will bring (1:14), and on the special purpose that John will serve, turning the children of Israel to the Lord and making ready a people prepared for the Lord (1:15–16). Zechariah now understands this message in broader terms—in terms of the salvation and redemption of Israel, based on God’s covenant faithfulness (1:68–75). It is not surprising that the most explicit connections between the two messages are found in statements about John and his ministry of preparation. Even here, Zechariah filters information in a way that changes the focus of Gabriel’s original message.

In 1:17, Gabriel says that John “will go before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to children ... to prepare a people ready for the Lord.” Instead of restating this message verbatim, Luke depicts Zechariah declaring something similar, with just a slightly different emphasis: “for you will go out before the Lord to prepare his paths, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins” (1:76–77). As similar as these two statements are, each has a slightly different focus. Whereas Gabriel’s message emphasizes the preparation of God’s people,³⁰ Zechariah’s highlights the content of the message that will lead to that preparation—a mes-

These passages from Acts will be treated at greater length in chapter 5 below. For the present, it is important to observe that the reader must not assume that Zechariah’s Benedictus is *either* a message generated by the Holy Spirit’s filling, *or* an interpretive statement of Zechariah. Indeed, it is both. Luke’s mention of the Holy Spirit does link the message of the Benedictus with God’s plan and purpose, but this does not prevent the possibility that Zechariah’s song establishes expectations that will be reshaped in the remainder of the story.

²⁹ As Grundmann observed, this is a “nationalpolitisch” understanding of God’s salvation (*Evangelium nach Lukas*, 72). In his discussion of Luke 1:74, Grundmann further suggested that this newfound political freedom would serve as the foundation for correct behavior: justice toward other people and holiness toward God (72).

³⁰ In Gabriel’s address (1:13–17), there is an emphasis on John as the one who will “turn” (ἐπιστρέφω) people (“turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God” [1:16]; “turn the hearts of fathers to children” [1:17]). This is followed in v. 17 by the redundant emphasis on John as the one who will “make ready” (ἐτοιμάζω) a people “prepared” (κατασκευάζω) for the Lord.

sage of God's mercy and salvation.³¹ Gabriel's promises and Zechariah's prophecies are similar enough that one can draw a definite connection between the two passages. On the other hand, Zechariah's assertions differ enough to indicate that he is interpreting, rather than merely restating, what Gabriel said.³²

Highlighting the way in which Zechariah filters his visionary experience leads one to ask what difference his interpretation makes in the story. The transition between the annunciation scene and Zechariah's Benedictus is significant. Precisely at issue here is the question of the relationship between Zechariah's vision and his perception of God's will. Gabriel said that John would go out before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah ... to prepare a people ready for the Lord." Interpreting Gabriel's announcement, Zechariah perceives God's will in terms of a dramatic transformation of human power and authority. Scholars have long noted that Zechariah's Benedictus is replete with allusions to Jewish Scripture. That is, he interprets his experience in light of a number of scriptural promises—promises related to God's covenant with Israel. For the purpose of this discussion, it is important to note the source of these allusions: they come from the lips of a character in the story. Unlike some of the formulaic statements in Matthew, one does not find here summary conclusions offered by the narrator.³³ Instead, it is the character Zechariah who draws conclusions about the larger implications of his visionary experience.

³¹ From those mentioned in the previous note, only the verb ἐτοιμάζω remains in Zechariah's declaration. Instead of emphasizing John as one who will "turn" (ἐπιστρέφω) people, Zechariah emphasizes God's salvation (σωτηρία) and redemption (λύτρωσις) of Israel (1:68, 69, 71, 77), and God's action of "looking favorably upon" (ἐπισκέπτομαι) Israel (1:68; see also 1:78).

³² As mentioned above (note 28), one notes a definite tension between understanding the Benedictus as interpretation and the explicit narrative description of this passage as "Spirit-filled prophecy" (1:67). Given the narrator's description in 1:67, one would have to ignore explicit cues in the narrative to suggest that the Benedictus is solely a rumination of Zechariah. On the other hand, the connections with the message of Gabriel noted earlier set this "prophecy" apart from some other Spirit-filled utterances in the narrative. In Acts 13:9–11, for example, Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies the blindness that immediately befalls Elymas. Despite possible parallels to Paul's own blindness in Acts 9, nothing in the narrative serves as a precursor for the events of Acts 13:9–11 in the way that Gabriel's message does for the Benedictus. Just as it would be a misreading of the text to miss the role of the filling of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of Zechariah, so, too, would it be a mistake to overlook the connections between the Benedictus and Gabriel's announcement—connections marking Zechariah's interpretation of his visionary experience.

³³ See, for example, Matt 1:22; 2:15; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4.

One may be tempted to understand Zechariah's Benedictus as a simple descriptive device. Having a character in the story emphasize the theological significance of John's birth and ministry would certainly be a compelling narrative technique. The reader who is already familiar with the larger Lukan story, however, finds Zechariah's words discordant with the outcome of the narrative. Israel's eschatological redemption and salvation from its enemies are invoked in Zechariah's interpretation, yet they do not come to fruition in the course of Luke's story. This raises questions about the reliability (or fallibility) of Zechariah's filter, and related questions about the narrative expectations created by Zechariah's interpretation. Scholars have come up with a number of answers for these questions. The present study will suggest, however, that the use of dream-visions in ancient literature may provide a crucial background for understanding both Zechariah's interpretation and the resultant problems of expectation and fulfillment. Because Luke's treatment of Mary raises similar or identical questions, these issues will be addressed after the following examination of Mary's vision and interpretation.

Mary's Vision

The Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38)

26 Ἐν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Γαβριὴλ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἣ ὄνομα Ναζαρεθ 27 πρὸς παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ ἔξ οἴκου Δαβὶδ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαριὰμ. 28 καὶ εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπεν, Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ. 29 ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἶη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος. 30 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτῇ, Μὴ φοβοῦ, Μαριὰμ, εὖρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ. 31 καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν. 32 οὗτος ἔσται μέγας καὶ υἱὸς ὑψίστου κληθήσεται καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὸν θρόνον Δαβὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, 33 καὶ βασιλεύσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακώβ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. 34 εἶπεν δὲ Μαριὰμ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον, Πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω; 35 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ. 36 καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἐλισάβετ ἡ συγγενὶς σου καὶ αὐτὴ συνείληφεν υἱὸν ἐν γήρει αὐτῆς καὶ οὗτος μὴν ἕκτος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τῇ καλουμένῃ στείρα· 37 ὅτι οὐκ ἀδυνατήσῃ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα. 38 εἶπεν δὲ Μαριὰμ, Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου· γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου. καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος.

26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph from the house of David; her name was Mary. 28 Having entered, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you.” 29 She was thoroughly shaken at this statement and wondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and you will bear a son, and you will call him ‘Jesus.’ 32 This one will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and God will give to him the throne of David, his ancestor. 33 He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” 34 Mary asked the angel, “How will this happen, since I do not know a man?” 35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy child will be called the Son of God. 36 Behold, your cousin, Elizabeth, has also conceived a son in her old age; this is the sixth month of pregnancy for the one being called barren, because nothing is impossible with God.” 38 Mary replied, “Behold, I am the slave of the Lord. May this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The description of Gabriel’s appearance to Mary varies slightly from the appearance to Zechariah.³⁴ In this case, Mary does not react until Gabriel has greeted her: “Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you” (1:28).³⁵ Her reaction, too, is different. Whereas Zechariah is “shaken” (ταράσσω), Mary is “thoroughly shaken” (διαταράσσω).³⁶ The narrator does not say that Mary is troubled by the appearance of the angel, but by the greeting itself: “she was thoroughly shaken at this *statement* (lit. “at the word”), and wondered what sort of *greeting* this might

³⁴ I am concerned here only with comparisons of the individual visionary experiences. On the significant differences in the way that Luke characterizes Zechariah and Elizabeth versus Mary, see Joel B. Green, “The Social Status of Mary in Luke 1:5–2:52: A Plea for Methodological Integration” (*Bib* 73 [1992]:461–466).

³⁵ It is interesting to note the relative frequency with which perfect middle/passive forms of χαρίζομαι occur in visionary contexts. Of the eight uses of this term in the LXX and NT, three are closely associated with dream-visions (2 Macc 3:33, Luke 1:28, and Acts 27:24).

³⁶ The verb διαταράσσω is much less common than the uncompounded form (see LSJ, s.v. “διαταράσσω”; and BDAG, s.v. “διαταράσσω”), occurring only here in the biblical tradition (i.e., LXX and NT). The more limited material for comparison makes interpretation of the connection and contrast between the two passages difficult. It is reasonable to suggest that the prepositional compound here adds strength to the sentiment of the verb (see LSJ, s.v. “διά”); thus the rendering “thoroughly shaken.” Both Nolland and Coleridge suggest a similar sense of intensification (*Luke*, 1:50; *Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 56).

be" (1:29). After Gabriel announces Mary's impending conception, her response turns from confusion to incredulity: "How will this happen, since I do not know a man?" (1:34).³⁷ Although more gentle than his response to Zechariah, Gabriel's reply to Mary is no less assertive about the power of God to accomplish what humans might consider impossible (ἀδυνατέω). Mary's initial response to her vision, characterized by her final words to Gabriel, is both humble and compliant: "Behold, I am the slave of the Lord. May this happen to me according to your word" (1:38).³⁸

For Mary's full response to her visionary experience, one must examine the broader context of Luke's first two chapters. The most striking example of Mary's filtered interpretation of Gabriel's announcement is the Magnificat. This song of praise, however, is only one of the scenes in which we find Mary responding, directly or indirectly, to her encounter with Gabriel. Unlike Zechariah, Mary appears repeatedly in the first two chapters of Luke. In some way, all of these scenes relate to Mary's vision.

When Mary visits Elizabeth in 1:39–45, her own greeting finds an extraordinary reception.³⁹ It is interesting that part of Mary's response to her visionary experience is filtered through Elizabeth. The first part of Elizabeth's statement reveals her own perception: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (1:42).⁴⁰

³⁷ Brown summarizes a variety of interpretations of this verse (*Birth*, 303–309).

³⁸ Mary's humility is denoted by her self-identification as the "slave" of the Lord; her compliance is indicated by the use of the optative (γένοιτο). Bovon asserts: "In none of the [Hebrew Bible] parallels does one find such an explicitly formulated assent as in this passage" (*Luke 1*, 53). Green discusses the significance of Mary's self-designation as a "servant of the Lord": "Mary's words carry with them a fundamental definition of her personhood ... partnership with God transcends the claims (and social position) of family. In the Greco-Roman world ... the status of a slave was determined by the status of the householder... . When Mary asserts her position as the servant of the Lord, we recognize that she derives her status from him, and so that Luke is now initiating his representation of a community of God's people whose fundamental social experience is grounded in their relationship to God" ("Social Status of Mary," 468).

³⁹ The repetition of ἀσπάζομαι and ἀσπασμός in 1:29, 40, 41, and 44 is striking. The noun, so prevalent in these verses, is not found in the LXX.

⁴⁰ In her article, "Female Social Behaviour: Two Descriptive Patterns within the 'Birth of the Hero' Paradigm" (*VT* 36 [1986]: 257–273), Athalya Brenner notes a number of significant differences between the Lukan infancy narratives and similar birth stories in the OT. Despite the grounds for potential conflict (various contrasting features "such as age, social standing, probably beauty," as well as the familial relationship between the two), "the elder and superior member of the pair acknowledges the superiority of the younger" (270). She goes on to observe that "[t]his is a new devel-

Elizabeth's final statement preceding Mary's song is rather remarkable: "Happy is the one *who believed that there will be a completion* of the things spoken to her from the Lord" (1:45). Indicated initially in v. 38, Mary's belief of Gabriel's message is now emphasized in an indirect way, filtered through the character of Elizabeth. Mary's own interpretation of the annunciation comes in the verses that follow.⁴¹

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55)

46 Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ,⁴² Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον, 47 καὶ ἡγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτῆρί μου, 48 ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ. Ἴδου γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί, 49 ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός. καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, 50 καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεάς καὶ γενεάς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν. 51 Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ, διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν. 52 καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς, 53 πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς. 54 ἄντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους, 55 καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

46 Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, 48 because he looked caringly on the humiliation⁴³ of his slave. Behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed, 49

opment, a sublimation of older themes and motifs. Faith, as it should, triumphs over personal ambition... . This, in its turn, informs and anticipates the lives and fates of their respective sons by eliminating the possibility of future power struggles between the heroes-to-be and by promoting co-operation instead" (270).

⁴¹ This poem has generated an array of studies, many of which focus on historical and source-critical questions (see, for example, Brown's treatment (*Birth*, 355–365); summary bibliographies are provided by Brown (*Birth*, 365–366) and Fitzmyer (*Gospel According to Luke*, 1:370–371). For the present discussion, the significance of the Magnificat is that it provides Mary's interpretation of her experience. As Gaventa has observed, "To examine the Magnificat only as a collection of quotations from Scripture or only as evidence of a pre-Lukan source is to overlook the significant question of what purpose it has in the present context. Whatever the history or source of the Magnificat, here it is *Mary's* interpretation of the events taking place... . Mary moves from being the object of Elizabeth's praise to becoming the interpreter of the gospel" (*Mary*, 56–58).

⁴² A small number of Latin manuscripts read "Elizabeth" instead of "Mary." The textual evidence for this variant is minimal and, in itself, not compelling. Nevertheless, some have attempted to argue for "Elizabeth" on contextual grounds. That is, a song of Elizabeth at this point in the narrative would serve as a parallel with that of her husband; the parallel with Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2 better fits Elizabeth's previous barrenness; etc. For a summary of the arguments and scholarship on this question, see Brown, *Birth*, 334–336.

⁴³ Although infrequent in the NT, ταπείνωσις occurs frequently in the LXX (notably in the song of Hannah [1 Sam 1:11], which is often taken as a corollary to the Magnifi-

because his power has accomplished great things. His name is holy, 50 and his mercy extends from generation to generation for those who fear him. 51 He has shown power in his arm. He scattered the arrogant by the intention of their hearts. 52 He overthrew the powerful from their thrones, and he exalted the humiliated. 53 Those who hunger he filled with good things, and the full he sent away empty. 54 He came to the aid of Israel, his servant,⁴⁴ to remember his mercies, 55 just as he said to our ancestors—to Abraham and his seed—forever.”

In the Benedictus, Zechariah’s interpretation passes over the personal elements of Gabriel’s announcement and moves immediately to the salvation and redemption of Israel. Mary’s song,⁴⁵ on the other hand, maintains an initial emphasis on the personal significance of God’s action. Although the reader might tend to pass over the formulaic statements in 1:30–31,⁴⁶ the first three verses of the Magnificat highlight the favor Mary has found with God. In vv. 46–47, Mary’s soul and spirit magnify and rejoice in God. Verse 48 gives the reason why: “because he looked caringly on the humiliation of his slave.”⁴⁷ The end of v. 48

cat). The translation “affliction” is appealing, but I have chosen “humiliation” because it allows one to compare more easily the use of ταπείνωσις here with the use of ταπεινῶω in Luke 14:11 and 18:14 (see “The Question of Expectations and Fulfillment” below). Gail O’Day discusses the problems raised by psychological translations like “humility” (“Singing Woman’s Song,” 207).

⁴⁴ The term παῖς could also be translated “child.” W. Zimmerli argues for “servant” here based on a comparison with Luke 1:69 (it should be noted, however, that David is also regarded as God’s “son” [υἱός] in LXX Ps. 2:7); J. Jeremias suggests that there was a slow transition from translating this word “servant” to “child” even as it was applied to Jesus (*The Servant of God* [SBT 20; Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1957], 45 and 86–87, respectively). Neither argument is decisive, and Luke uses παῖς in both ways at various points in the narrative (e.g., “servant” [Luke 7:7, 12:45, 15:26]; “child” [Luke 2:43, 8:51, 9:42]).

⁴⁵ Perhaps the most striking difference between the narration of Mary’s song and that of Zechariah is the lack of a statement regarding the filling of the Spirit. Although one could suggest that the Spirit’s role continues from 1:35, the lack of explicit mention provides a contrast between 1:46 and 1:67 (see also Gaventa, *Mary*, 58). Thus, Mary’s utterance can be regarded as her own interpretation of events with less complication. Coleridge puts it nicely: “As one might expect in a hymn of praise such as this, the thrust is essentially theological, with the focus upon God. Yet God himself is not addressed directly... . The mode of address is horizontal rather than vertical. This is because the stress of the hymn is upon *human recognition of God* rather than upon God” (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 88 [emphasis mine]).

⁴⁶ Language of finding (εὐρίσχω) favor (χάρις) with God abounds in the OT (see, for example, Gen 6:8, 18:3; Exod 33:13, 33:16, 33:17; and Prov 12:2). Similarly, the annunciation formula in 1:31 is very similar to that found in Gen 16:11 and Judg 13:3.

⁴⁷ One remarkable feature of Mary’s song—a feature that complicates interpretation—is the predominance of the aorist tense. Although similarities have long been

provides the strongest indication of the personal way in which Mary has interpreted her visionary experience: “Behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.” Even as the primary focus of her song shifts to a broader view of God’s power and mercy, and the reversals they bring about for Israel, first person pronouns recur in vv. 49 and 55, keeping Mary within the scope of the action.⁴⁸

In the rest of the Magnificat, there are fewer points of contact with Gabriel’s message. Instead, these verses reflect Mary’s interpretation of what it will mean for her son to possess the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob forever. She interprets this to mean that God shows mercy from generation to generation to those who fear him (1:50). It means that there will be a dramatic upheaval within the spheres of human power and authority: “[God] overthrew the powerful from their thrones, and he exalted the humiliated” (1:52); the hungry

noted between this passage and Hannah’s song in 1Sam 2, the verbs in the latter are typically present and future tense (see especially 1Sam 2:6–10). Indeed, how one translates these aorist verbs determines much about how one understands Mary’s song. If these are to be translated temporally, Mary’s declarations about God’s power and mercy are issued largely in the simple past tense, as though God has already accomplished the reversals described in the Magnificat. As we will discuss later, however, such a reading is in tension with the way Luke’s story turns out. These aorist verbs could also be translated in the gnomic sense, expressing a general truth about God’s mercy (see, for example, Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984], §1931). This would relieve some of the interpretive tension, but that is not necessarily the right reason to adopt such a reading.

Grundmann argues that these aorists are based on the semitic *Vorlage*, and that they should be understood as having a sense of futurity (*Evangelium nach Lukas*, 65). Brown outlines three possibilities. First, the aorists may be gnomic, describing God’s “habitual” action toward the “mighty/lowly” and “rich/hungry.” Second, (as with Grundmann) they may represent “prophetic perfect tenses” describing God’s future action. The third option, preferred by Brown, is that these aorists reflect the fact that this canticle was composed by Jewish Christians after the death of Jesus, describing the salvation brought about through Jesus’ death and resurrection. For Brown, this last possibility does not eliminate the eschatological anticipation of the canticle. Rather, “the Magnificat describes a decisive past event with decisive future consequences (*Birth*, 648–649). In my own view, none of these three possibilities eliminate the problems mentioned above. Bovon summarizes the same possibilities as Brown (*Luke 1*, 57), and suggests finally that Luke may have understood these aorists as “inchoate” (64). Because there is no clear grammatical solution to the problem, it is left to the interpreter to determine the most adequate contextual solution.

⁴⁸ Bovon observes: “The recipient of God’s salvific activity (‘my, me’ [μου, μοι, με]) is generalized to include ‘those who fear him,’ who are probably identical with ‘the lowly’ and ‘the hungry,’ and even with Israel itself” (*Luke 1*, 56). As Gaventa suggests: “Mary’s speech, then, connects her own situation as the lowly slave of God to that of Israel (‘to Abraham and to his descendants forever’)” (*Mary*, 57).

are filled, and the full are sent away empty (1:53). As with Zechariah's song of praise later in the chapter, Mary's Magnificat is significant for the present study precisely because it reveals her perception of God's will in the wake of her visionary experience. She interprets Gabriel's announcement as a declaration of political and social transformation. There will be transformation, but not of the sort that Mary's song evokes. Instead, these expectations are reshaped in the story that follows.⁴⁹

Mary's response to her visionary experience does not end with the praise-filled Magnificat. Although her character recedes from the foreground, she is present throughout much of Luke 1–2;⁵⁰ it is quite interesting to note the narrative description of her responses to other characters' statements about her child, and to the child himself. In particular, such descriptions are found after the report of the shepherds (Luke 2:18–19),⁵¹ Simeon's blessing (Luke 2:33), and Jesus' question about his parents' search (Luke 2:50).

Luke 2:18 indicates that all who heard the story of the shepherds were amazed.⁵² Because this reaction is attributed to “all those who heard the report of the shepherds,” and because “amazement” will become such a typical reaction to miraculous or supernatural activity in the rest of Luke-Acts,⁵³ it is difficult to assess the significance of this verse for understanding Mary's own reactions.⁵⁴ Verse 19 goes on to

⁴⁹ See “The Question of Expectations and Fulfillment” below.

⁵⁰ As Green suggests: “With Gabriel's departure, Mary will serve as the central figure holding together the scenes of the birth narrative” (*Gospel of Luke*, 83). Brown observed, however, that one could take this a step further: “Only one figure constitutes a bridge from the infancy narrative to the ministry of Jesus, and that is Mary his mother. She is the only adult mentioned in these two chapters who reappears in the body of the Gospel” (*Birth*, 429).

⁵¹ This marks another necessary break in the narrative order of my analysis. In order to include all of Mary's interpretive actions in this section, I will postpone discussion of the shepherds' vision, which is treated separately below.

⁵² The word θαυμάζω is a particular favorite of Luke; he uses it 18 times in Luke-Acts. Several of these instances are associated in some way with a dream-vision (Luke 1:21, 2:18, 24:41; Acts 7:31).

⁵³ See the use of θαυμάζω in Luke 8:25, 9:43, 11:14, 24:12, 24:41; and Acts 2:7.

⁵⁴ Gaventa suggests that Mary is not included in the πάντες of v. 18 (*Mary*, 61); so also Kremer, *Lukasevangelium*, 38. This leads to a strong contrast between the reaction in v. 18 and the reaction attributed directly to Mary in v. 19. Green concurs, noting that “more reflection is needed in order [for Mary] to appreciate fully the meaning of this concurrence of events” (*Gospel of Luke*, 138). The Lukan narrative leaves open the possibility of this separation, but does not require it. The particle δέ in 2:19 need not be taken as an indication of contrast any more than it should in 2:17. If there were a

say that “Mary kept (συντηρέω) all these words, pondering (συμβάλλω) [them] in her heart.” The verb συντηρέω is used only here in Luke-Acts, and an allusion to the book of Daniel (4:28 and 7:28) is probable.⁵⁵ Both of the characters in Daniel, however, are “keeping” interpretations of their own visions. Luke’s use of the term is interesting in that Mary is responding to the vision report of other characters. Particularly striking is the ambiguity resulting from the use of συμβάλλω. This verb is used a number of times in Luke-Acts, with meanings ranging from “encounter” (Luke 14:31; Acts 20:14) to “debate” (Acts 4:15, 17:18).⁵⁶ However one translates the verb here, the interesting thing is that Mary appears to be thinking about what the shepherds have said. Rather than taking for granted this affirmation of what she herself has heard about her son, she keeps these things, pondering them in her heart.⁵⁷ She engages the related experience of others.

The reactions of Mary and Joseph to Simeon are described collectively: “they were amazed (θαυμάζω) at the things being said about him” (2:33). In this case, Mary and Joseph may also be responding to the gradually unfolding prophecies of who Jesus is and who he will become. In Gabriel’s address, Mary learned that Jesus would sit on the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob. The shepherds’ message related more information: the baby Jesus is born as savior and anointed Lord (2:11). Simeon’s declaration widens the scope of Jesus’

μέν in 2:18, one could argue conclusively for separating the reactions of the crowd from that of Mary. Instead, Luke’s willingness to attribute “amazement” (θαυμάζω) to Mary a few verses later (2:33) makes this separation much less certain.

⁵⁵ The verb συντηρέω is not altogether uncommon in the LXX, occurring over thirty times. To “keep in the heart,” however, is a phrase occurring only at Dan 4:28 and 7:28. In 4:28, it is used of Nebuchadnezzar “keeping in his heart” Daniel’s interpretation of his vision. In 7:28, it is used to describe Daniel “keeping in [his] heart” the interpretation of his own vision provided by the heavenly interpreter. It is interesting to note that the marginal note in NA²⁷ mentions only the latter.

⁵⁶ I have chosen the more neutral “ponder” simply because the context does not necessitate something as strong as “debate.” W.C. van Unnick, however, has argued that συμβάλλω should be translated with the sense of “interpret” in contexts featuring dreams or visions (“Die rechte Bedeutung des Wortes treffen, Lukas 2, 19” in *Verbum—Essays on Some Aspects of the Religious Function of Words* [ed. T.P. van Baaren et al.; Utrecht: Kemink, 1964], 129–147). He supports this thesis with texts like Josephus, *Ant.* 2.5.3, in which ὄναρ (“dream”) is the object of the participle συμβάλλον (135).

⁵⁷ This is all the more interesting given the rather flat description of the shepherds themselves, who believe immediately that what the angel said has come to pass (“Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass” [Luke 2:15]). See the discussion of this passage below.

significance even further. Now, in addition to being “[God’s] salvation” and “the glory of Israel,” Jesus is said to be a light to the Gentiles.

It is the interchange between Jesus and his parents in the Temple that is perhaps most perplexing. When they find the missing boy and Mary expresses their distress, Jesus asks, “Why is it that you were searching for me? Did you not know that it is necessary for me to be about the business⁵⁸ of my father?” (2:49). In response, the narrative states simply that his parents “did not understand (συνίημι) what he said to them” (2:50).⁵⁹ The verb συνίημι is very significant in Luke. Found throughout the LXX and notably in Isa 6:9–10, which Luke quotes twice in Luke-Acts (Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26–27), this verb is also employed by Luke in the response to one of Jesus’ passion predictions (Luke 18:34), and in the pivotal transition of Luke 24:45: “then he opened their minds in order that they might understand the Scriptures.” In this final scene of the infancy narrative, there is a remarkable change from what has come before. Here, Mary is expressing distress and is unable to understand her son. After all she has been through, all she has seen and heard, she cannot understand what her son means when he says that he must be “about the business” of his father.⁶⁰ What began with the visitation of

⁵⁸ Dennis D. Sylva notes that the three most common translations of ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς are: “in my father’s house”; “about my father’s affairs”; and “with those belonging to my father” (“The Cryptic Clause *en tois tou patros mou dei einai me* in Lk 2 49b” *JNW* 78 [1987]: 133–134; Sylva provides a supplementary bibliography in notes 4, 5, and 6 on those pages). Sylva argues that this verse “refers to the necessity of Jesus’ teaching ministry in the temple,” suggesting a modified translation: “did you not know that I must be concerned with my father’s words in the temple?” (134). I have chosen an adaptation of the KJV translation because I think it fits the sense of this scene.

⁵⁹ A number of scholars have attempted to reconcile this lack of understanding. Coleridge provides a summary of some of the more far-fetched suggestions, which include the idea that Jesus told his parents what he was going to do before the family’s departure and that it was this earlier statement that Mary and Joseph misunderstood (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 207 n. 1). Coleridge rightly criticizes these attempts as unsatisfactory from the perspective of narrative criticism. Unfortunately, Coleridge himself falls victim to a similar tendency, suggesting “[i]t is not that they did not know that Jesus must be ‘in the things of my father’; what is puzzling is that for him to be ‘in the things of my father’ should mean the kind of thing he has done” (207). Such a reading presumes a great deal that is *not* in the narrative.

⁶⁰ As C. Clifton Black has observed, the grace (χάρις), the favor that God has bestowed upon Mary (χαρίζομαι [Luke 1:28]) is not dependent on Mary being “extraordinarily responsible, pious, or perceptive” (“*Ave Maria, Gratia Plene: An Exemplar of Grace in the New Testament*” in *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford* [ed. Robert K. Johnston, L. Gregory Jones, and Jonathon R. Wilson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998], 40). As Black continues, “one of the points made by Luke’s narration of this

Gabriel in 1:26 has ended in a very unpredictable way, with Mary and Joseph being the first not to understand Jesus. After the family's return to Nazareth, the narrator says once again that Mary "was keeping"⁶¹ all of these things in her heart."⁶² The beginnings intimated in Mary's initial reaction to Gabriel's annunciation and in the Magnificat have taken a rather unpredictable turn. Decisive interpretation has turned into amazement and incredulity.

This turn of events accentuates the inquiry of this study: To what extent do the dream-visions in Luke-Acts obviate human discernment? Mary's vision and subsequent actions provide an interesting context in which to consider this question. In fact, the story of Mary in Luke 1–2 flies in the face of any suggestion that dream-visions nullify the role of human perception and interpretation. If the acceptance of and response to dream-visions is so automatic, why does Mary appear to have such difficulty understanding her subsequent experience? The only indications given in the narrative are that the progressive unfolding of reality does not bear out what Mary's initial interpretation anticipated. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss more fully the question of narrative expectations⁶³ established in the infancy stories and the way these expectations are reshaped in the remainder of the narrative.

remarkable story is that through Jesus God's grace is truly bestowed, from the beginning and consistently, on those who, like Mary, misunderstand or reproach it—who, in fact, tend to look for grace everywhere but where it must be found" (40).

⁶¹ The verb in 2:19, however, was συντηρέω. In 2:51, Luke uses διατηρέω. Since Luke uses the latter only here and Acts 15:29, it is difficult to make a definite distinction. LSJ also offers the definition "watch closely, observe" for διατηρέω. Given Mary's most recent reaction to Jesus, this may be a better translation. "Treasured all these things," offered in the NRSV, may be a bit more positive than the context warrants.

⁶² Gaventa has suggested that "[t]he narrator leaves quite unclear what exactly Mary may be anticipating, and only by neglecting important threads in the story may we assume that she anticipates Jesus' role with complete understanding and acceptance" (*Mary*, 69).

⁶³ Throughout this examination, the issue of expectations has surfaced repeatedly. Two categories of expectation must be differentiated. First, there is the question of "expectation" in the sense of predictability. In the passages just discussed, it has been noted that Luke's description of events breaks the bonds of predictability. Despite the direct intervention of heavenly intermediaries, Mary and Joseph fail to understand what their son tells them. The second category of expectation is more significant for understanding the function of these visions in the broader story of Luke-Acts. These are the expectations raised by Mary's and Zechariah's interpretive predictions—expectations that do not necessarily find fulfillment in the narrative.

The Question of Expectations and Fulfillment

Both Mary and Zechariah interpret their experiences in terms that echo and allude to Jewish Scripture. More specifically, they interpret the conception and birth of their respective children as an indication of the fulfillment of various promises within that Scripture.⁶⁴ It is interesting, therefore, to find in the infancy narrative declarations of fulfillment that, in turn, establish very specific expectations for what is to come in Luke's story. This twist is interesting precisely because these new expectations are not necessarily fulfilled in the Lukan narrative. Both the Magnificat and Benedictus focus heavily on salvation from oppression, on God's rescue of Israel from its enemies. Since such social and political salvation do not occur within the scope of Luke's story, scholars have struggled with the expectations that these hymns establish in the narrative.⁶⁵ Before presenting more recent discussions of this problem,

⁶⁴ The effect of these interpretations on the beginning of Luke's narrative is described nicely by Tannehill: "In an important sense the Gospel of Luke begins in mid-story and immediately makes us aware of that fact. We cannot understand what the excitement is about unless we realize that ancient hopes, treasured in the hearts of the Jewish people, are coming to fulfillment. The 'narrative world' which the reader must comprehend in order to appreciate the literary work does not begin with 'the days of Herod the king'... but stretches back at least to God's promise to Abraham" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:18).

⁶⁵ Green repeatedly notes the social and political aspects of these expectations (e.g., *Gospel of Luke*, 59, 88, 99–100, 104, 112), but he also observes that social, religious, and political matters are inextricably bound together in the narrative. He states the case most vividly in his treatment of the Benedictus: "Zechariah's Song seems to portray two conflicting images of salvation, the one social and political, the other spiritual... For Luke, the reconciliation of God's people and deliverance from enemies are both part of one divine movement. For him, visions of salvation cannot be categorized as social *or* religious *or* political, for the epoch of peace is characterized by *all of these*" (114–115, emphasis mine). Precisely how one should understand distinctions between social power, religious power, and political power in Luke's Gospel is a difficult matter. On the one hand, Green can say of the Magnificat: "that these verbs sponsor images of God's salvific work that are so concrete and this-worldly ... requires that we not relegate Mary's vision of redemption to some distant future or spiritualize it as though it were not concerned with the social realities of daily existence" (100). On the other, he suggests that the political implications of the "Songs of Mary and Zechariah" are brought to bear in the juxtaposition between Caesar Augustus and Jesus: "this usage sets Jesus in religio-political opposition to the emperor" (122–123). Already one can see a disjuncture. Luke may well be contrasting Augustus, the self-proclaimed political "savior," with the "Savior who is Christ the Lord." However, Luke's use of *σῶτης* hardly creates a simple comparison between Jesus and Augustus. Aside from Herod's wormy demise in Acts 12, human "rulers" are not cast from their thrones in Luke-Acts. Luke's story as a whole focuses very little

it is necessary to treat the source theories that prevailed in discussions of the Magnificat and Benedictus for much of the twentieth century.

Why do the perspectives in the Magnificat and Benedictus seem at odds with the larger perspective of Luke's narrative? It is because Luke has incorporated pre-existing hymns within the infancy narrative without bothering to smooth the rough edges. Albeit oversimplified, this is the general answer provided by scholars concerned with source criticism. In 1897, François Jacobé argued: "les cantiques, le Magnificat et le Benedictus, ont un peu l'air des pieces rapportées dans le recit."⁶⁶ Eighty years later, Brown made a similar observation: "the canticles fit awkwardly into their present context. If they were omitted, one would never suspect their absence."⁶⁷ Theories spawned by such readings of Luke 1 have abounded.

One of the more interesting suggestions has been offered by Paul Winter, who argued that the Magnificat and Benedictus were psalms of praise for victory in battle written during the Maccabean period and later adapted in the birth tradition of John the Baptist.⁶⁸ Although provocative, Winter's theory founders on a lack of evidence. Part of his own argument is telling in this regard:

Let us see whether the contents of the poems fit the *assumption* that they were composed as war songs in the Maccabean times. There is nothing in the contents of the two hymns that would rule out the idea of their having been composed as Psalms of Praises incanted by a militant crowd before joining battle or as triumphal odes after victory had been achieved on the battlefield.⁶⁹

on human power and authority. Moreover, the Jesus portrayed by Luke is unconcerned and unimpressed with political power (Luke 13:31–33, and especially 22:24–27).

It should also be noted that some scholars would disagree with the claim that the words of Mary and Zechariah establish expectations that remain unfulfilled in Luke's narrative. A notable example is found in the assessment of Donald H. Juel, who suggested that Zechariah's prophecy already begins to "redirect expectations": "We hear nothing of possessing the land, nothing about the dominion of the king, little to conjure up images of the splendor of King David and Solomon. If there is continuity with the tradition, there are also surprises" (*Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1983], 23).

⁶⁶ François Jacobé, "L'origine du Magnificat," *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses* 2 (1897): 429 (cited in Paul Winter, "Magnificat and Benedictus—Maccabean Psalms," *BJRL* 37 [1954]: 338).

⁶⁷ Brown, *Birth*, 347.

⁶⁸ Winter, "Magnificat and Benedictus—Maccabean Psalms," 328–347.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 341 (emphasis mine).

It is true that “there is nothing in the contents of the two hymns that would rule out” this “assumption.” Unfortunately, it is also true that there is nothing in the contents of the two hymns that requires, or even commends, such an assumption.⁷⁰ To make matters worse, there are no extant “Psalms of Praises” from the Maccabean period “incanted by a militant crowd before joining battle or as triumphal odes after victory.”

Brown suggested that the Magnificat and Benedictus originated as canticles composed by “Jewish Christian Anawim,” celebrating “the salvation accomplished in Jesus.”⁷¹ They fit the context of Luke’s birth stories inasmuch as “[t]he piety and the concept of salvation found in the canticles corresponded well to the piety and the concept of salvation that one could expect from the main figures of the infancy narrative.”⁷² Brown concluded: “Accordingly, Luke decided to add the canticles to his infancy narrative. Rather than rewrite the whole narrative to make this addition unnoticeable, Luke was content to leave rough seams. One cannot prove this theory, but it solves more difficulties than any other.”⁷³

What is crucial for the present discussion is whether one can read the Lukan narrative in a more “seamless” manner than the source critics have proposed. Recent studies by scholars employing narrative criticism and discourse analysis have suggested different solutions to the “difficulties” noted by Brown. Nevertheless, disagreements continue to plague the discussion of how the reader is to understand the unfulfilled expectations created by the songs of Mary and Zechariah. Examples of this disagreement are found in the respective commentaries of Robert Tannehill and Joel Green.

⁷⁰ Despite a lack of evidence supporting his “Maccabean hymn” thesis, Winter has made an important contribution to the study of the Lukan canticles in his comparison of these hymns with that found in 1 Chron 16:8–36. Like the Lukan hymns, one finds in the First Chronicles passage “a collection and agglutination of remembered passages from older Hebrew poetry” (“Magnificat and Benedictus—Maccabean Hymns,” 333). This raises significant questions about Jewish hymns, their relationship with earlier Jewish Scripture, and the influence these hymns exercised on the writers of the New Testament. On this subject, see James H. Charlesworth, “A Prolegomenon to a New Study of the Jewish Background of the Hymns and Prayers in the New Testament” (*Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 [1982]: 265–285); idem, “Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers (ca. 167 B.C.E. – 135 C.E.)” (in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* [ed. R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986], 411–436); idem, “Jewish Hymns ‘The Prayer of Manasseh: The Classic Jewish Penitential Prayer’” (*Expl* 2 [1988]: 1).

⁷¹ Brown, *Birth*, 353.

⁷² Ibid., 349.

⁷³ Ibid.

Tannehill has suggested that the ultimately unfulfilled expectations in the Benedictus render Zechariah an “unreliable” character.⁷⁴ This suggestion is part of Tannehill’s larger argument that Luke-Acts is, in a sense, a story presented in a tragic mode: “The first readers of Luke would read these happy words in a historical context which gives them a tinge of pathos. They could already, at this point in the story, begin to sense that Israel’s story will be presented as a tragedy.”⁷⁵ Joel Green, on the other hand, has argued: “However, it must not be overlooked that Zechariah has spoken under the inspiration of the Spirit, and this gives us no basis for regarding him or his message as in any way unreliable.”⁷⁶

These initial vision stories in Luke are complex. They feature Gabriel, an angel of the Lord; it would be problematic to suggest that this figure is unreliable or fallible.⁷⁷ Other cues in the narrative militate

⁷⁴ More precisely, Tannehill suggests that Zechariah is an “unreliable interpreter of the story” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:35, n. 46). This aspect of Tannehill’s analysis is discussed more thoroughly below (see p. 188 n. 79).

⁷⁵ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:34.

⁷⁶ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 114. Here, Green clarifies that he is contending against Tannehill’s claim. Tannehill’s own attempt to reconcile this issue is summarized as follows: “Zechariah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, rightly understands the saving purpose for Israel behind the birth of John and Jesus and rightly reacts with joy. But he does not know that much of Israel will reject its king and that this rejection will be prolonged, blocking fulfillment of the hope for Israel’s freedom” (*Narrative Unity* 1:35). Given Tannehill’s suggestion as to the unreliability of Zechariah, it is interesting to note that no such claim is made about Mary.

⁷⁷ Gabriel’s annunciations to Zechariah and Mary allude to scriptural texts that evoke both the eschatological “Day of the Lord” (Luke 1:17; cf. LXX Mal 3:1–2, 22–23) and the promise of an everlasting Davidic kingdom (Luke 1:32–33; cf. LXX 2 Sam 7:12–16). It is fair to say, therefore, that the filtered interpretations of Mary and Zechariah fit the context of their visionary experience. At issue here is the question of expectation and fulfillment. If one wants to argue that Mary’s and Zechariah’s interpretations establish expectations that must be reshaped in the course of the narrative, then it is necessary to address the role that Gabriel’s annunciations play in this pattern of expectation and reshaping expectation. Despite some lexical variations between Luke 1:17 and the material in LXX Mal 3, the allusions mentioned above are unmistakable. Yet nothing transpires in Luke’s story that fulfills this anticipation of an eschatological day of judgment or the reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy. Gabriel’s reliability, however, is never questioned, which is unsurprising given the explicit narrative assurance that he is sent by God (Luke 1:19 and 26). Nevertheless, the expectations established in Gabriel’s annunciations must be reshaped in Luke’s narrative in much the same way that those established by Mary’s and Zechariah’s interpretations are. The solution I would suggest for this conundrum is based on my appropriation of Bartsch’s analysis below. Although one may compare the problem of expectations set by Gabriel’s annunciations to those set by the interpretations of Zechariah and Mary, one may also distinguish Gabriel from these human characters based on the simple fact that he is presented as an angel who stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). If Mary and

against evaluating Mary or Zechariah as “fallible filters.” Mary is one who has found favor with God (1:30), and who responds to Gabriel’s news with acceptance and humility (1:38). Likewise, Zechariah’s Benedictus is described as prophecy in the narrative, uttered under the filling of the Holy Spirit (1:67). Thus, Green is correct to question Tannehill’s assessment of Zechariah as an “unreliable” character. The impetus for Tannehill’s challenge, however, remains. How is the reader to deal with the fact that the expectations set by this visionary and interpretive beginning remain unfulfilled at the end of the story?⁷⁸

The use of dream-visions in ancient narratives provides relatively unexplored territory in which one might seek an answer to this question. At the root of Tannehill’s challenge to Zechariah’s reliability is the understanding of character reliability within contemporary narrative theory.⁷⁹ Although narrative criticism provides an excellent method for

Zechariah *mis*interpret their visionary experiences in such a way that these interpretations must be reshaped in the narrative, I would argue that Gabriel’s announcements can be understood as oracular statements—statements that *could* be interpreted the way that Mary and Zechariah interpret them, but actually turn out to mean something different in the story. As Bovon suggests, “The phrases ‘throne of David’ and ‘house of Jacob’ are provincially limited concepts ... but the endlessness of his reign advocates its future extension to universality” (*Luke* 1, 53). This will be discussed further below.

⁷⁸ Some earlier scholars might have solved this problem by dissociating chapters 1–2 from the rest of Luke’s Gospel. See, for example, the rather infamous claim of Hans Conzelmann: “But as the objection might be raised, that the authenticity of these first two chapters is questionable, we have not taken into consideration the statements that are peculiar to them” (*The Theology of St. Luke* [trans. Geoffrey Buswell; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961], 118). The problem with this view, of course, is that later scholars have established strong, credible arguments demonstrating that the Gospel is a unified narrative, making such dissociation unfeasible. See, for example, the summary of evidence compiled by Paul Minear (“Luke’s Use of the Birth Stories,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts* [ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 111–130). This is not to suggest, however, that the debate over this evidence has been closed. See, for example, Brown’s discussion of where Luke 1–2 fits within the compositional history of Luke-Acts (*Birth*, 240). Brown does not argue against the Lukan composition of the infancy narrative, but against the idea that Luke began composing Luke-Acts at Luke 1:1 (241).

⁷⁹ As the title suggests, the foundational claim behind Tannehill’s two volume commentary, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, is that Luke-Acts is a unified story: “the episodes in Luke-Acts are parts of a unitary story because they are related to a unifying purpose, the purpose of God” (21). One of the four most important aspects of the narrative in this regard are “interpretive statements by reliable characters” (21). Using Booth’s definition of character reliability (“The author is present in every speech given by any character who has had conferred upon him, in whatever manner, the badge of reliability” [*Rhetoric of Fiction*, 18; quoted in *Narrative Unity*, 1:22, n. 20]), Tannehill offers this qualified assessment: “We can scarcely doubt that angels are reliable messen-

reading and understanding Luke-Acts, it must be employed with sensitivity toward the use of other narrative devices in ancient literature. The “reliability” of the characters in the Lukan infancy narrative—characters whose privileged position in relation to God and the Holy Spirit is undeniable—may not be the best place to look for an explanation of unfulfilled, or more accurately, reshaped expectations. Instead, it may be more helpful to look at the way that dream-visions work in some other narratives from antiquity. The work of Shadi Bartsch is especially helpful in this regard.

As discussed in chapter 1, dream-visions often serve a complex descriptive role in ancient texts. Characters sometimes respond to deceptive dreams in ways that radically redirect the plot of the story.⁸⁰ In later literature, dreams often take on an oracular dimension, in which multiple interpretations are possible. As Bartsch has observed, dreams in the narratives of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus necessitate interpretation, both by the characters in the story and by the reader. What she finds in these particular narratives is a technique in which initial misinterpretations or misunderstandings on the part of the characters both redirect action in the plot and temporarily mislead the reader. Later in the story, both characters and readers realize there is a more accurate interpretation of these initial dreams.⁸¹

Although it would be a mistake to import uncritically Bartsch’s reading of these ancient novels into the study of dream-visions in the Gospel of Luke, her analysis of the complex function of dreams and dream interpretation can inform our understanding of the dream-vision scenes in Luke’s infancy narrative. Particularly helpful is Bartsch’s emphasis on initial misunderstandings that are corrected later in the narrative. Although their interpretive declarations do not come to pass within Luke’s story, Zechariah and Mary are not “fallible filters.” Instead, these texts indicate Luke’s use of a narrative technique that allows him

gers for God within the Lukan world view. The indications that Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1:41, 67; 2:25–27), and the description of Anna as a “prophetess” (2:36), would seem to indicate that they, too, are reliable spokespersons for God. *However, this conclusion must be verified by comparing what they say with the subsequent course of the narrative, and this comparison may raise some questions, especially with regard to the strong statements of salvation for Israel in some of these prophetic utterances*” (22, emphasis mine).

⁸⁰ See chapter 1 for a discussion of Homer, *Il.* 2.6–9 and of William Messer’s work on this issue.

⁸¹ The salient features of Bartsch’s study are outlined in chapter 1 (see p. 26 above).

both to reveal expectations related to the coming Savior,⁸² and to show how those expectations had to be reshaped in light of that Savior's actual earthly ministry.

Since the narrative of Luke-Acts does not include a reflective discussion of the initial interpretations of Mary and Zechariah *vis-à-vis* the actual outcome of the story, it is necessary to look more deeply to find the ways in which these early interpretations are related to the rest of Luke's narrative. An important question is whether the language of the Magnificat and Benedictus recurs in other contexts of Luke's narrative. If Luke appropriates language from these songs with very different implications as the story continues, one may argue that the expectations established in the infancy narrative are being reshaped.⁸³

In Luke 1:48, Mary offers the first reason why her soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God, her savior: "Because [God] looked caringly (ἐπιβλέπω) upon the humiliation (ταπείνωσις) of his slave." In the context of the Magnificat, this act of "looking caringly" is associated with the language of power reversal described in vv. 51–53. It is interesting to note that the word ἐπιβλέπω occurs in none of the other canonical Gospels, and that it recurs only once in Luke: "And behold a man from the crowd cried out, saying, 'Teacher, I beg you to look caringly (ἐπιβλέπω) upon my son,'⁸⁴ for he is my

⁸² Mark Strauss adduces a fairly wide range of relevant primary sources that demonstrate expectations of a "Davidic" messiah in the first centuries BCE and CE; see, for example, *Pss. Sol.* 17; 4Q174 (4QFlorilegium); 4Q504; 4Q285; 1 *En.* 48.10, 49.3, and 62.2; and 4 *Ezra* 12.32 (*The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* [JSNTSup 110; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 40–48). On conceptions of the messiah in Jewish Scripture, and on messianic expectations, see also James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). For messianic expectations at Qumran, see Charlesworth, ed., *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1998).

As Green observes, such expectations are clear in the rather transparent references to the promises of an "everlasting" Davidic dynasty (2 Sam 7:11–16) in Luke 1:32–33 (*Gospel of Luke*, 85).

⁸³ Tannehill suggests: "As readers become actively engaged in the exploration of the narrative's symbolic world, central symbols expand in significance, enticing us to give full attention to their mysteries and meanings. Repetitive pattern can contribute to deepening disclosure as new associations are suggested, guiding readers in the discovery of expanding symbols with hidden residues of meaning" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:20); here Tannehill quotes the work of E.K. Brown: "the expanding symbol is repetition balanced by variation, and that variation is in progressively deepening disclosure" (*Rhythm in the Novel* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956], 57).

⁸⁴ The account in Mark does not contain this language: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, because he has a mute spirit" (Mark 9:17). Matthew's version is more similar to

only child. Look a spirit takes him and suddenly it cries out and it throws him into convulsions with foam at his mouth, and even after bruising him up it scarcely leaves him” (9:38–39). Mary’s initial interpretation of Gabriel’s announcement is that the conception and birth of her son will be an act in which God “looks caringly” upon God’s slave by effecting reversals of human power and authority on a grand scale. As Luke’s story moves forward, this same image is reshaped to describe Jesus’ ministry to an individual—a ministry of healing in which the broader cosmic powers of “spiritual” (πνεῦμα) forces are reversed.

The use of words related to ταπεινῶω in the Magnificat is perhaps even more intriguing. The “humiliation” (ταπείνωσις) imagery, upon which God has looked caringly in 1:48, recurs in the reversal described in v. 52: “[God] overthrew the powerful from their thrones, and he exalted (ὑψῶω) the humiliated (ταπεινός).” The imagery of ‘exaltation’ and ‘humiliation’ recurs only twice in Luke-Acts (Luke 14:11, 18:14). In both passages, Jesus denigrates self-exaltation, telling his disciples, “Everyone exalting himself will be humbled, and the one humbling himself will be exalted.”⁸⁵ The passage in Luke 18 is particularly significant, however, because Jesus is describing someone who is exalting himself *before God*: “Oh God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of the people” (ὁ θεός, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὥσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων [18:11]). It seems clear that Mary’s song refers to the overthrow of human rulers in v. 52; the term δυνάστης is used elsewhere in Luke-Acts only to refer to the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:27). What is important for this discussion is that Luke reshapes this imagery from the statement of human power reversal made in Mary’s Magnificat to a warning against presuming one’s own relationship to God’s power and authority.⁸⁶ Luke completes the reshaping of this image in Acts 2:33 and

Luke’s, but employs another term: “Lord, have mercy (ἐλέησον) upon my son, because he is an epileptic and suffers terribly” (Matt 17:15).

⁸⁵ This statement found in 14:11, and repeated in 18:14, is no less significant because it is from the source common to both Matthew and Luke (see Matt 23:12). First, Luke thought it important enough to repeat. Second, it is the linguistic connection Luke makes between 1:52 and reshaped language of humbling and exaltation (14:11, 18:14) that is important, not the source from which he derived statement.

⁸⁶ The reading argued here raises questions for those interpretations in which the Magnificat is lifted up as a focal text for liberation theology. Gail O’Day, for example, laments: “There is a tendency in much scholarship to spiritualize and de-politicize these women’s songs [i.e., the songs of Miriam, Hannah, and Mary], particularly the Magnificat, but such a tendency negates the power of God which these texts make manifest.

5:31, where Jesus is described as having been exalted (ὑψώω) to the right hand of God. Again, this is a very different sense of exaltation than one finds in Mary's song.

The language of mercy (ἔλεος) is significant in both the Magnificat and Benedictus. Found twice in each song (1:50, 54 and 1:72, 78),⁸⁷ "mercy" describes God's action toward those who fear God (1:50), toward God's servant Israel (1:54), toward the ancestors with whom God made God's covenant (1:72), and toward the contemporary people of God (1:78). In the context of both songs, this "mercy" describes power reversals, as well as political deliverance. It is interesting to note that the "mercy" so significant for these songs recurs only once in the rest of the Lukan narrative. In Luke 10:25, a lawyer asks Jesus, "By doing what will I inherit eternal life?" In turn, Jesus asks the lawyer what is written in the Law (10:26). The lawyer replies, "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself" (10:27). When the lawyer asks for clarification, Jesus offers the uniquely Lukan Parable of the Good Samaritan. Following the parable, Jesus asks the lawyer, "which of the three seems to you to have been a neighbor to the one who fell among robbers?" (10:36). The lawyer answers, "the one who showed mercy (ποιέω ἔλεος) to him" (10:37). The likelihood that this is picking up on the use of ἔλεος in the infancy narrative is strengthened by the use of the verb ποιέω, which also occurs in the Benedictus (ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν [1:72]).⁸⁸ Once again, imagery related to political deliverance has been reshaped in Luke's story, this time fitting into the broader cosmic context of "eternal life."

Mary does not sing of spiritual poverty and spiritual hunger, but of gnawing and aching poverty and hunger" ("Sing Woman's Song," 209). I would agree. Mary depicts the reversal of human power and authority. It is also important to note, however, that these are not the kind of power reversals that take place in Luke's narrative. There can be no question that the Magnificat is a powerful song, and important for imagining God's power and desire to liberate the oppressed. Nevertheless, it is necessary to see where this song leads in the text. The political power reversals Mary describes do not take place. Instead, Luke seems to subordinate political and social concerns—power in the sphere of human authority—to the larger issue of God's plan and purpose. This observation is not meant as an argument against liberation theology, but instead suggests that Luke's presentation of Mary's song contains far more nuance in its broader narrative context.

⁸⁷ The word also occurs in v. 58, describing the neighbors' rejoicing at God's mercy (ἔλεος) with Elizabeth.

⁸⁸ Although Green does not comment on the recurrence of ἔλεος, he does note another connection between the Benedictus and this parable in Luke's repetition of the verb πλανάω (Luke 1:78 and 10:33 [*Gospel of Luke*, 426]).

The emphasis has shifted from changes in human power to what it means to love the Lord God and one's neighbor.

This reshaping of expectations is found in relation to other language in the Benedictus, as well. As with the Magnificat, one of the best examples occurs in the explanation given for Zechariah's praise, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel": "for he has looked favorably (ἐπισκέπτομαι) upon, and made redemption for, his people" (1:68). The significance of ἐπισκέπτομαι in the Benedictus is emphasized by its repetition in v. 78: "through the heartfelt compassion of our God the dawn from on high will shine (lit. "look favorably" [ἐπισκέπτομαι]) upon us."⁸⁹ This verb, so important in the Benedictus' message of political deliverance,⁹⁰ recurs only once in the rest of the Gospel, in the uniquely Lukan tradition of the healing of the widow's son at Nain. After Jesus raises the widow's son in 7:14, all the people begin glorifying God, saying, "God has looked favorably (ἐπισκέπτομαι) upon his people" (7:16).⁹¹ The favorable visitation of God in 1:68 and 78 anticipates deliverance from "our enemies" and "all who hate us" (1:71)—deliverance from human powers. These expectations are reshaped and fulfilled in 7:16 through Jesus' compassion for a widow, in which he literally overcomes the power of death.⁹² In Acts 15:14, a programmatic statement in which the Gentiles become a λαός for God, this same verb is used in a way that reshapes expectations even more: "Simeon has described how God first looked favorably (ἐπισκέπτομαι) to receive a people for his name from among the Gentiles."⁹³

⁸⁹ Luke's use of ἐπισκέπτομαι and ἐπισκοπή provides the infrastructure for Coleridge's study, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*. He argues: "Strategically placed texts such as [Luke 1:68, 1:78, 7:16, and 19:44] suggest that questions concerning the shape of the divine visitation and the recognition of it are central to the narrative of Luke-Acts" (22). Coleridge's interpretation of Luke's use is close to my own. As noted below, however, he argues that Luke's reshaping of expectations begins already in the Benedictus with the "redefinition" of salvation as the forgiveness of sins (121). Although I agree with Coleridge that Luke is redefining messianic expectations, I disagree strongly with his suggestion that the songs of both Mary and Zechariah represent correct interpretations of their respective visionary experiences (e.g., *Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 93 and 124).

⁹⁰ Note especially vv. 68 and 71.

⁹¹ Green notes the verbal connection between Luke 1:68, 78 and 7:16, but does not comment on the way that Luke has re-appropriated this imagery in the latter passage (*Gospel of Luke*, 113 and 292).

⁹² Tannehill also comments on Luke's use of ἐπισκέπτομαι, but his emphasis is quite different. He does not mention the recurrence of the verb in 7:16, but instead focuses on the noun ἐπισκοπή in 19:44 where Jesus mourns over Israel (*Narrative Unity*, 1:36).

⁹³ Given the importance of ἐπισκέπτομαι in Coleridge's argument, it is interesting to note that he does not mention this use of the verb in Acts. Luke's use of λαός in Acts

Expectations of power reversal and political deliverance established in the Magnificat and Benedictus are not so much unfulfilled in Luke's story as they are reshaped. Luke re-appropriates language used in these songs to highlight the ways in which these predictions find unexpected forms of fulfillment in the narrative.⁹⁴ Terms like ἐπιβλέπω and ἐπισκέπτομαι are re-appropriated to describe Jesus' healing of afflicted individuals. The language of exaltation and humiliation within spheres of human power and authority is re-appropriated by the Lukan Jesus in a way that focuses on the relationship between people and God. The mercy of God described in terms of human power in the Magnificat and Benedictus is re-appropriated to describe the attainment of eternal life by loving God with all one's heart, soul, and strength, and by loving one's neighbor. The hymns of Mary and Zechariah are not "pieces" roughly "attached" to Luke's narrative, as Jacobè and other source critics have suggested. Instead, they are part of the fabric of the Lukan narrative. Would one miss them if they were omitted? Yes. Without these hymns, there would be nothing in Luke's narrative describing the messianic expectations that had to be reshaped in order to understand Jesus' actual earthly ministry.

also creates a contrast with some other NT texts. In Matthew, for example, λαός is used exclusively of Israel.

⁹⁴ Coleridge suggests that something like this is already present within the Benedictus itself. Arguing that Luke 1:70–75 serves as an "analeptic interpretation" and that 1:76–79 functions as a "proleptic reinterpretation," Coleridge says that the idea of salvation is being redefined between vv. 70 and 77: "The movement of the canticle suggests that it will be John's task to prepare the way of God by enabling the people to move from a sense of messianic salvation as the fruit of military victory ... to a sense of messianic salvation as the fruit of forgiveness which leads to a journey into peace" (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 123 [see also 119–122]). Despite the fact that this link between "salvation" and the "forgiveness of sins" is rare in Jewish literature (the only parallel I find is Sir 2:11), I would argue that Coleridge attempts to make the Benedictus do too much too soon. Verse 76 provides a transition within the canticle, but there is no indication in the narrative that the salvation repeated in v. 69 and 71—understood as salvation from "all those who hate us"—loses its social and political connotations just because the salvation mentioned in v. 77 takes on a different sense. Furthermore, the attempt to read the political connotations out of the Benedictus falters on the military imagery inherent in the "multitude of the heavenly army (στρατία)" of Luke 2:13 (which Coleridge remarks "strikes an ironic note after the Benedictus's redefinition of salvation as the fruit not of military might but of forgiveness" [143]).

Green argues for a singular point of redefinition, focusing instead on Luke 10:18. Here, he suggests, Satan is revealed to be the true enemy (cf. Luke 1:71). His observation will be noted in the discussion of that passage below.

For the purposes of the present study, the initial misinterpretations of both Mary and Zechariah are crucial for understanding Luke's use of dream-visions. In each case, the characters of the story are visited by an angel and told exactly what to do. Nevertheless, their understandings of these events, seen most clearly in their songs of praise, do not reflect the outcome of the story. They filter their experiences in keeping with common messianic expectations. Luke then re-appropriates the language of these interpretations to show the ways in which they find unexpected, reshaped fulfillment.

This discussion of reshaping expectations, however, raises another pressing question. The suggestion that Luke reshapes the expectations raised by the interpretations of Zechariah and Mary is not meant to imply that Luke creates a dichotomy between socio-political concerns and religious concerns. Such a dichotomy would be anachronistic and misleading.⁹⁵ The socio-economic critique leveled by John the Baptist in Luke 3, for example, rules out any chance that Luke would separate social, economic, or political practices from a proper religious or spiritual orientation. Instead, the point of the present argument is to highlight the disjuncture between the prophecies of Mary and Zechariah and the actual ministries of John and Jesus, and to examine the way in which Luke reconciles this disjuncture. Luke describes messianic expectations that include a strong emphasis on human power reversals, and then redirects these expectations to emphasize a different kind of power: God's power.⁹⁶ This redirection is characterized by Luke's juxta-

⁹⁵ Nolland's attempt to circumvent such a dichotomy is worth noting: "The socio-political language of [Luke 1:52–53] should not be spiritualized away, but justice is only done to it when it is seen in relation to the matrix established in the poem by the juxtaposition of the ethico-religious (esp. vv. 50, 51), the socio-economic (vv. 52–53), and the ethnic or national (vv. 54–55)... . Each must be allowed to interpret the other (see further at Luke 4:18; 6:20–26); values from none of the spheres can be allowed to stand alone. Due weight must also be given to the use of stereotyped OT language here, which should not be pressed ... to drive a wedge between Luke's attitude to poverty and riches and that brought to expression here in the Magnificat: the Magnificat is a soteriological statement in traditional terms and reflects on poverty and riches solely within that framework. One may speak similarly in relation to the nationalism of vv. 54–55. Luke never denies the appropriateness of Israel's national hope, but he establishes a cosmic framework for its fulfillment and opens it up for the inclusion of the Gentiles" (*Luke*, 1:72–73). This suggestion is interesting, but one wonders whether phrases like "each must be allowed to interpret the other" and "due weight must also be given to the use of stereotyped OT language" might tend to dull the images of power reversal that are so dramatic in Luke's text.

⁹⁶ In the remainder of this section, I will be discussing certain depictions of God's power in the remainder of Luke's Gospel. The issue of power comes up repeatedly

position of God's power and authority with other conceptions of power and authority.

In the Magnificat and Benedictus, Mary and Zechariah refer to reversals of, or deliverance from, various forms of human power and authority. In her interpretation of her experience, Mary speaks of God as a God of "power" (ὁ δύνάτος), who overthrew the "powerful" (δυνάστας) from their thrones (Luke 1:49, 52). Zechariah prophesies salvation and deliverance from "our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us" (ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς πάντων τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς). This language of "power" and "enemy" is redirected as Luke's story progresses, and the idea of "authority" is added to the narrative in a way that enhances this redirection. The texts that follow are not exhaustive, but do offer a glimpse of the redirection described here.

In Luke 4:5–8, the devil offers Jesus authority (ἐξουσία) over all the kingdoms of the world, if Jesus will only worship him. Jesus' response is that one is to worship and serve only God. Authority is not only mentioned in this passage, it is emphasized by a string of modifiers: τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἅπασαν (lit. "every last bit of this authority" [Luke 4:6]). Although the temptation scene is found in each of the Synoptics, this language is uniquely Lukan. The Matthean text says nothing about ἐξουσία, describing the kingdoms more generically: ταῦτά σοι πάντα δώσω ("I will give you all of these things" [Matt 4:9]). Luke's use of this language continues in the scene at Capernaum (Luke 4:31–

in Bovon's treatment of the Magnificat. Our concerns differ, however, in the type of power being addressed. In his discussion of vv. 52–53, Bovon suggests: "When God inaugurates his reign, he necessarily shakes the mighty from their thrones and demands the money of the rich. If he did not do so, he would be neither just nor good, and thus not God. The child's birth signifies the end of many privileges and oppressions" (Luke 1, 63). He understands, however, that these claims are in tension both with Luke's story and historical reality: "Luke knows more than Mary and lives *after* Jesus' mission, cross, and resurrection. He knows how God *has* attended to his people Israel in Jesus Christ. But the tension remains; less than ever have the rich and the rulers lost their position of power today" (64). The solution for Bovon is both to take a cue from Luke's text and to step farther away from it: "The key ... I believe, is the Lukan beatitude in v. 45, in which Mary is described as blessed and believing; she awaits the fulfillment of God's promise in faith... . Christians believe that the resurrected one reigns *now*, and they do sometimes see the oppressed gaining their dignity through God's actions. The reversal of conditions has already begun in form of a sign. Thus Luke could also have understood the aorists as inchoate. To this extent we can find no solution, but we can *pray* the Magnificat, in faith that a fulfillment of God's word should be expected, and that it has already begun" (64). This argument is compelling, and helpful for those who wish to maintain the socio-political charges of the Magnificat. As I will discuss below, however, I think that Luke takes the issue of God's power in a different direction.

37). The parallel scenes in the other Synoptics also feature the term ἐξουσία (Mark 1:22, 27; Matt 7:29), but it should be noted that Luke's formulation ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ ("with authority" [Luke 4:32, 37]) sets his use of the term apart from Mark and Matthew (both of whom use ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ["as having authority"]).

Perhaps more important is Luke's modification of the scene in which the twelve are imbued with authority and sent out (Luke 9:1–6; cf. Mark 6:6–13 and Matt 10:1, 9–11, 14). In both the Markan and Matthean accounts, the twelve are given ἐξουσίαν πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ("authority over unclean spirits"). Luke, however, adds to the account: the twelve are given "power and authority over all demons" (δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ δαιμόνια). The addition of "power" (δύναμις) in Luke 9:1 is amplified when the twelve return by the uniquely Lukan statement of Jesus: δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ("I have given you the authority to walk upon snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" [10:19]). Here, the authority given the disciples is further characterized as authority over "all the power of the enemy." As Green has observed, this "enemy" is very different from the "enemies" from whom Zechariah prophesied deliverance in Luke 1:71, 74.⁹⁷ In Luke 10, the reader finds that the "enemy" is neither a human being, nor a human institution; the real enemy is Satan, the enemy of God.

Luke does not create a dichotomy between socio-political concerns and religious concerns. Instead, he creates a distinction between the role of human power and authority and the importance of God's power and authority. In one way or another, Luke's emphasis on the power of God surfaces in each of the dream-visions in the rest of Luke-Acts.

The Shepherds' Vision (Luke 2:8–15)

2:8 Καὶ ποιμένες ἦσαν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῇ αὐτῇ ἀγραυλοῦντες καὶ φυλάσσοντες φυλακὰς τῆς νυκτὸς ἐπὶ τὴν ποίμνην αὐτῶν. 9 καὶ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπέστη αὐτοῖς καὶ δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν. 10 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ ἄγγελος, Μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, 11 ὅτι ἐτέχθη ὑμῖν σήμερον σωτὴρ ὃς ἔστιν Χριστὸς κύριος ἐν πόλει Δαβὶδ. 12 καὶ τοῦτο ὑμῖν τὸ σημεῖον, εὗρήσετε βρέφος ἐσπαργανωμένον καὶ κείμενον ἐν φάτνῃ. 13 καὶ

⁹⁷ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 419–420.

ἐξαίφνης ἐγένετο σὺν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ πλῆθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου αἰνούντων τὸν θεὸν καὶ λεγόντων, 14 Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας. 15 Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἀπῆλθον ἀπ' αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν οἱ ἄγγελοι, οἱ ποιμένες ἐλάλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Διέλθωμεν δὴ ἕως Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἴδωμεν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο τὸ γεγονός· ὁ ὁ κύριος ἐγνώρισεν ἡμῖν.

2:8 There were shepherds in the same region staying outside and keeping watch over their flock during the night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold I bring to you joyous news, which will be for all the people. 11 Today a savior is born for you in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.⁹⁸ 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a baby swaddled and lying in a feeding trough.” 13 Suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel. They were praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among people of good favor.” 15 When the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let’s go into Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

This is the third appearance of an angel thus far in the story, and each time character reactions seem to mount. Zechariah was “shaken” (ταράσσω) by the sight of Gabriel (1:12). Mary was “thoroughly shaken” (διαταράσσω) by her experience (1:29). The shepherd’s reaction is described with the intensively redundant ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν: “they were terrified” (lit. “they feared a great fear”).⁹⁹ In keeping with the formal conventions used earlier (1:13 and 1:30), the angel’s first words are “do not be afraid” (2:10). Just as the characters’ initial reactions mount in each of the successive vision stories, the drama of the vision itself is heightened in this passage. In the first two visions, the visual element of the experience is clearly subordinated to the aural message. Although this could be said of the shepherds’ vision, one must also note the increased intensity of the visual element. Added to the appearance of the angel is the “glory of the Lord” that shines around the shepherds, shattering the darkness of night. Following the angel’s announcement about the birth of the savior, the shepherds’ vision is punctuated by

⁹⁸ An alternative translation, “the lord messiah,” has been argued by Robert Hann based on the same phrase in *Ps. Sol.* 17:32 (“CHRISTOS KYRIOS in *PsSol* 17:32: “The Lord’s Anointed Reconsidered,” *NTS* 31 [1985]:620–627). Hann suggests that this was a messianic title, based supposedly on the Hebrew מֶשִׁיחַ אֲדֹנָי.

⁹⁹ In the LXX, this Semitism is rendered similarly only in 1 Macc 10:8 (the reaction of those in Jerusalem to the news that Jonathan was given the authority to recruit troops). Similar syntax is found in Jonah 1:10 (the sailors’ reaction to Jonah’s declaration that he himself is the reason for their calamity).

the “sudden” (ἐξαίφνης) appearance of a “multitude” of the host (lit. “army” [στρατία]) of heaven.

In contrast to the reactions of Zechariah and Mary, and in juxtaposition to the drama of the vision, the shepherds’ response to their dream-vision is rather simple: “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord¹⁰⁰ has made known to us” (2:15). Their fear is gone. Far from questioning the angelic message, they presume that what has been announced has already come to pass (τὸ ὄημα τοῦτο τὸ γεγονός¹⁰¹ [2:15]).¹⁰² Luke creates a certain pattern in the presentation of visions in the infancy narrative. Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds share some initial discomfiture in their experience, and, in each case, the angelic visitor attempts to assuage their fear. All receive a message about the significance of the birth being announced. Thus, the reader might expect the shepherds to follow the examples of Mary and Zechariah, offering some interpretation of their experience. They do not.¹⁰³ The narrative says only that they “make known the things announced to them concerning the child,” and that they leave, “glorifying and praising God” because what they had seen and heard was “just as” (καθώς) they had been told it would be. Indeed, the lack of any interpretive utterance is underscored by the repeated narrative emphasis that they expressed only what they had been told.¹⁰⁴ This lack of any elaboration on the part of the shepherds is all the more surprising given the striking declaration made by Simeon a few verses later (2:28–35).

The story of the shepherds’ vision adds both predictability and unpredictability to Luke’s use of dream-visions. The shepherds’ automatic response to their experience marks the first instance in which a

¹⁰⁰ Green notes the fact that the shepherds attribute to “the Lord” (2:15) the message that was spoken by “an angel of the Lord” (2:9) (*Gospel of Luke*, 137). This sort of fluidity is common in OT theophanies; see, for example, Hagar’s experience in Gen 16 and Moses’ encounter with the “burning bush” in Exod 3. See also the discussion of Newsom in the introduction (pp. 13–14).

¹⁰¹ This point is underscored by the perfect tense of γεγονός.

¹⁰² Green has observed that even the shepherds’ final action of “glorifying” (δοξάζω) God in 2:20 is an obedient response to what the angels have shown to be the proper response to God’s salvation and mercy in 2:14: “Glory (δόξα) to God in the highest” (*Gospel of Luke*, 136).

¹⁰³ *Contra* Coleridge, who suggests that the angels in 2:9–14 are offering an “interpretation” of Jesus’ birth, and that the shepherds, in their act of repeating their experience, “become interpreting angels” (*Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 148). It is difficult to argue that the words of the angels in 2:9–14 are any different from the announcements made by Gabriel in Luke 1.

¹⁰⁴ Note the repetition of passive forms of λαλέω in 2:17, 18, and 20.

vision *does* seem to obviate the role of human interpretation. For readers who are inclined to understand visions as a sign of divine compulsion, the shepherds react predictably: assuming immediately that what the angel said has come to pass. In an interesting twist, however, this “predictable” reaction serves to make Luke’s use of visions more *unpredictable*. Surrounded by the relatively elaborate interpretive reactions of Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon, the shepherds’ automatic response is a rather surprising turn in the narrative.

Other Dream-Visions in Luke’s Gospel

The Descent of the Spirit and God’s Affirmation (Luke 3:21–22)

21 Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ βαπτισθῆναι ἅπαντα τὸν λαὸν καὶ Ἰησοῦ βαπτισθέντος καὶ προσευχομένου ἀνεῳχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανὸν 22 καὶ καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον σωματικῶς εἶδει ὡς περιστερὰν ἐπ’ αὐτόν, καὶ φωνὴν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γενέσθαι· σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

21 When all the people were baptized, and when Jesus had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. A voice came from heaven: “You are my son, the beloved; I am pleased with you.”

Daniel Marguerat has noticed that “as soon as Jesus comes on the scene ... he monopolizes the divine, so that the appearances of angels, ecstasies and irruptions of the Spirit are reserved for him alone.”¹⁰⁵ Although there are exceptions,¹⁰⁶ this observation generally holds true. The baptism scene,¹⁰⁷ however, is difficult to assess.¹⁰⁸ The reader is

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Marguerat, “The God of the Book of Acts,” in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts* (ed. G.J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 162. B.J. Koet makes a similar argument. Addressing the disparate number of dreams and visions in Acts, as compared with Luke’s Gospel, Koet suggests that this form of divine communication is not so necessary in the Gospel because there God speaks directly to Jesus, much in the same way that God spoke directly to Moses (“Divine Communication in Luke-Acts” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* [ed. J. Verheyden; Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1999], 750–757).

¹⁰⁶ Marguerat notes the exception of the Transfiguration in 9:28–36; one should also add 5:26, where ἔξοταις seizes the crowd witnessing the healing of the paralytic.

¹⁰⁷ As others have remarked, Luke displays little interest in the baptism itself (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 56; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 185).

¹⁰⁸ Green’s comments on the function of this visionary episode are helpful. Given the expectations established in the infancy narratives that will be reshaped in the rest of the story, the presence of a divine voice and the message it renders in this scene are

given no reason to think that Jesus alone witnessed the Spirit's descent; the words from heaven are clearly directed to Jesus, but nowhere is it explicit that he alone hears the message. As the immediate context of Luke 4 will make clear, both the descent of the Spirit and the message itself, however brief, are vitally important for Luke's story. Gabriel announced that Jesus would be called the "Son of the most high" (1:32), and Jesus demonstrates an understanding of himself as the Son of God in the Temple scene (2:49). Nevertheless, this is the first time that God has confirmed Jesus' status directly.¹⁰⁹ The reader certainly has reason to expect some sort of reaction from Jesus,¹¹⁰ but instead runs immediately into Luke's version of the genealogy. As in the cases of Zechariah and Mary, the response to this visionary experience is delayed until Luke's description of the temptation scene.¹¹¹

The Temptation (Luke 4:1–13)

Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ 2 ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου. καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ συντελεσθεισῶν αὐτῶν ἐπείνασεν. 3 Εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ διάβολος, Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰπὲ τῷ λίθῳ τούτῳ ἵνα γένηται ἄρτος. 4 καὶ ἀπεκρίθη πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Γέγραπται ὅτι Οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος. 5 Καὶ ἀναγαγὼν αὐτὸν ἔδειξεν αὐτῷ πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐν στιγμῇ χρόνου 6 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ διάβολος, Σοὶ δώσω τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἅπασαν καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ παραδέδοται καὶ ὃ ἐὰν θέλω δίδωμι αὐτήν· 7 σὺ οὖν ἐὰν προσκυνήσῃς ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, ἔσται σοῦ πᾶσα. 8 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Γέγραπται, Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις. 9 Ἦγαγεν δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἔστησεν ἐπὶ τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, βάλε σεαυτὸν ἐντεῦθεν κάτω· 10 γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι

significant: "The purpose of the divine voice in 3:22 is above all that of providing an unimpeachable sanction of Jesus with regard to his identity and mission. Working in concert with the endowment of the Holy Spirit, this divine affirmation presents in its most acute form Jesus' role as God's agent of redemption" (*Gospel of Luke*, 187).

¹⁰⁹ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 57; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 185.

¹¹⁰ Cf., for example, the acquiring of disciples following the baptism in the Gospel of John (1:35–51).

¹¹¹ Tannehill finds the thread for this connection in Luke's repeated and emphatic mention of the Spirit: "The descent of the Spirit has a narrative effect; it initiates a sequence of events. In the introduction to the temptations, the narrator not only tells us that Jesus was 'full of the Holy Spirit' but also that 'he was being led by the Spirit in the wilderness' (4:1)" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:57). Tannehill's argument is treated more fully in the discussion of the temptation scene below.

Τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ ἐντελεῖται περὶ σοῦ τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε, 11 καὶ ὅτι Ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀροῦσίν σε, μήποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον τὸν πόδα σου. 12 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Εἴρηται, Οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου. 13 Καὶ συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν ὁ διάβολος ἀπέστη ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἄχρι καιροῦ.

Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, 2 where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. He ate nothing during those days. When they came to an end, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, speak to this stone so that it may become bread." 4 Jesus answered him, "It is written: 'A person will not live on bread alone.'" 5 Leading him up, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world in an instant. 6 Then he said to him, "I will give to you all this authority and the glory that comes with it, because it has been handed over to me and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if you bow down before me, all will be yours." 8 Answering, Jesus said to him, "It is written: 'You shall bow down before the Lord your God and you shall serve him alone.'" 9 He led him to Jerusalem and stood him upon the parapet of the Temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: 'he will command his angels concerning you, in order to protect you,' 11 and 'they will lift you up on their hands, lest you strike your foot on a stone.'" 12 And answering, Jesus said to him, "It is said: 'You shall not test the Lord your God.'" 13 Having finished every test, the devil departed from him until an appropriate time.

Although not uniquely Lukan,¹¹² the temptation scene is rather remarkable as a dream-vision. Despite some clear connections in Luke-Acts to apocalyptic material like the text of Daniel, Luke's use of dream-visions does not usually fit within the models common to apocalyptic literature. The temptation scene is an interesting exception in a number of ways.¹¹³ John Collins has described the genre of Apocalypse as "revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being."¹¹⁴ In the temptation, Jesus' experience is imposed by an otherworldly figure, but one who is not associated with God.¹¹⁵ In keeping with the reversal of this pat-

¹¹² See Matt 4:1–11 and the very brief reference in Mark 1:13.

¹¹³ The implication that Satan is the actual "ruler of this world" (cf. Luke 4:6), taken by itself, suggests an apocalyptic perspective (Grundmann, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, 116).

¹¹⁴ John Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

¹¹⁵ More accurately, the devil is an otherworldly figure who opposes God's plan and purpose. For a summary of descriptions of Satan in the OT and later Jewish literature relating to the temptation scene, see Susan Garrett (*The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 38–43). Garrett views the temp-

tern, it is not the “intermediary” that interprets what is seen. Instead, Jesus responds¹¹⁶ to each “temptation” with a scriptural interpretation that refutes the devil’s offer.¹¹⁷ Supernatural opposition is countered by appeal to Jewish Scripture as a statement of divine sanction.¹¹⁸

More important for this discussion is the narrative connection between the temptation and the earlier baptism scene (3:21–22)—a connection marked both by the prominence of the Spirit and the focus on Jesus as the Son of God.¹¹⁹ The same Spirit that descended upon Jesus in 3:22 is said to fill Jesus and lead Jesus into the wilderness in 4:1, and the devil’s temptation of Jesus focuses expressly on what it means to be the Son of God.¹²⁰ It is in this testing that one sees Jesus’ response to

tation scene from a slightly different perspective than the one employed here, suggesting that “[t]he issue of authority appears to be a key factor in the struggle with Satan” (38).

¹¹⁶ Given the discussion of the “filling of the Holy Spirit” in the context of Luke 1–2 (see the discussion of Zechariah’s “prophecy” above), it is important to note Green’s assertion about the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit in the temptation scene: “There is one immensely consequential proviso with respect to this reading of Jesus’ active role, however. This is Luke’s narratological declaration that Jesus is not acting on his own. Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus is full of the Spirit, and inspired by the Spirit. His central, active role is therefore fundamentally as God’s agent, and it is this special relationship and its implications that lie at the root of Jesus’ identity in Luke-Acts. Not surprisingly, then, it is this that will be tested in the encounter between Jesus and the devil” (*Gospel of Luke*, 191). Jesus’ relationship with the “Spirit” seems unique as compared to the relationship between the Spirit and other characters, just as his relationship with “God” is unique.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of how Jesus’ responses allude to and differ from the response of Israel to God (especially as expressed in Deuteronomy), see Green (*Gospel of Luke*, 192–193). As noted above, Tannehill observes a connection between the Temptation and the Baptism scene pertaining to Jesus’ status as the “Son of God”: “the descent of the Spirit and the divine declaration of sonship are understood as an anointing for the mission described in Isa 61:1–2, which thus becomes an important disclosure of what it means for Jesus to be God’s Son. In the temptation scene, where we find explicit reference to Jesus as God’s Son (4:3, 9), the devil introduces false understandings of Jesus’ Sonship” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:58).

¹¹⁸ Whether Jesus actually “struggles” with any of the devil’s offers, Tannehill’s comments are interesting in terms of an understanding of Jesus’ perception of God’s will within this visionary experience: “In the temptation scene Jesus’ dedication to God’s purpose, rather than his own desires, is tested. The successful outcome of this test requires the rejection of one understanding of what it means to be the Son of God anointed with the Spirit and the acceptance of another understanding” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:58–60).

¹¹⁹ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:55; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 191. Schürmann aptly subtitled the portion of his commentary dealing with 4:1–13, “Die Bewährung des Sohnes” (*Lukasevangelium*, 1:204).

¹²⁰ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 191–192; see also Nolland, *Luke*, 1:182. This point was also made much earlier by Oscar Cullman (*The Christology of the New Testament* [rev. ed.;

the visionary message of 3:22. In the first and last of the three temptations, the devil uses the same wording as 3:22, challenging Jesus as the “Son of God.” When Jesus responds to these temptations, therefore, he is responding not only to the devil, but also to the confirmation offered by the voice from heaven. The devil’s conditional challenges, posed in the form “if you are the Son of God, ...,” allow Jesus to refute the devil’s false stipulations about what the Son of God should do by declaring more accurately what this sonship means.¹²¹ Jesus’ response to all three challenges indicates that sonship means serving God rather than his own needs or desires.¹²²

*The Transfiguration (Luke 9:29–36)*¹²³

29 καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ προσεύχεσθαι αὐτὸν τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἕτερον καὶ ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ λευκὸς ἕξαστράπτων. 30 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο συνελάλουν αὐτῷ, οἵτινες ἦσαν Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας, 31 οἱ ὁφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ, ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ. 32 ὁ δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ ἦσαν βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ· διαγρηγορήσαντες δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς δύο ἄνδρας τοὺς συνεστῶτας αὐτῷ. 33 καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἅπ’ αὐτοῦ εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, Ἐπιστάτα, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὥδε εἶναι, καὶ ποιήσωμεν σκηνάς τρεῖς, μίαν σοὶ καὶ μίαν Μωϋσεῖ καὶ μίαν Ἡλίᾳ, μὴ εἰδὼς ὁ λέγει. 34 ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ἐγένετο νεφέλη καὶ ἐπεσκίαζεν αὐτούς· ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν νεφέλην. 35 καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε. 36 καὶ ἐν τῷ γενέσθαι τὴν φωνὴν εὐρέθη Ἰησοὺς μόνος. καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐσίγησαν καὶ οὐδενὶ ἀπήγγειλαν ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις οὐδὲν ὧν ἑώρακαν.

trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], 277). Cullman’s observation is in service of his argument against Bultmann and others that the title “Son of God” was adopted from the non-Jewish, Hellenistic conception of the miracle worker (θεῖος ἀνὴρ). Cullman cites Luke 4:3, 9 as a key example in which the title “Son of God” has nothing to do with working miracles in the Synoptics.

¹²¹ As Bovon has observed: “It is clear that the title ‘Son of God’ is not being defended as such, but rather the exercise of power associated with it” (*Luke 1*, 143).

¹²² Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:60; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 193–196. As Tannehill suggests, Jesus’ response to the visionary experience in 3:22 finds completion in Jesus’ synagogue address in 4:18–19: “We can understand 3:22 in the Lukan perspective only if we attend to the interpretation of this event as a call to the mission described in 4:18–19” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:58).

¹²³ Although noted as an exception to Marguerat’s argument earlier (see p. 149 n. 106), I am not including a discussion of Luke 5:26 here. The reference to the ἔκστασις that “seizes” the crowd does not fit within the parameters of dream-vision experiences discussed above (see the introduction, pp. 8–14 above).

29 While he was praying, his appearance changed and his garments shone brightly. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, were speaking with him. 31 Having appeared in glory, they were talking about his departure, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. 32 Peter and those with him had been sleeping soundly; upon waking, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As they were departing from him, Peter said to Jesus—without really understanding what he was saying—“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 34 While he said these things, a cloud appeared and enveloped them. They were afraid as they went into the cloud, 35 and a voice came from the cloud saying, “This is my son, the one who has been chosen; listen to him!” 36 When the voice spoke, Jesus was found to be alone. They were silent in those days and reported nothing about the things they had seen.

The transfiguration is found in each of the synoptic accounts,¹²⁴ but there are some uniquely Lukan elements that are of particular interest.¹²⁵ These elements include a slight change in the visionary perspective in Luke, the narrative explanation of Peter’s reaction, the disciples’ response to the experience, and the impetus for their silence.

¹²⁴ See Mark 9:2–10 and Matt 17:1–9.

¹²⁵ There is a clear connection between the transfiguration tradition present in the Synoptics and the Sinai experience described in Exodus (see especially Exod 19–31). Among other indications, one may note: the use of the terms *ὄρος* and *νεφέλη*; God speaking from the cloud (e.g., Luke 9:35; cf. Exod 24:16); the presence of Moses on the mountain; Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus about his *ἐξοδος*; and the possible play on the term *σκηνή* (e.g., Luke 9:33; cf. Exod 25:9–26:35). Based on this connection, the rough parallels between the human participants is important. Parallels between Jesus and Moses are established in Luke-Acts (e.g., Acts 3:22). In this scene, however, the lines are somewhat blurred. Since the voice from the cloud speaks directly to the disciples, they are also comparable to Moses. On the other hand, their fearful reaction and hesitance to engage this experience also parallels them with “the people.” What is perhaps most striking about the vision itself is the message that comes from the voice in the cloud. At Sinai, God’s theophany is accompanied by the ten commandments and numerous other ordinances. On this mountain, God gives only one command: “This is my son ... listen to him!” See also Green’s discussion of this background (*Gospel of Luke*, 377–385 [especially 377–379]). For Green, the transfiguration “calls upon this choir of voices [echoes of OT passages] especially to stress the image of Jesus as liberator from bondage, his ministry as one of release from captivity in all its guises” (379). Green goes on to note the remarkable significance of this vision in Luke: “throughout the Lukan narrative thus far, God has been content largely to operate, as it were, behind the scenes, via the Scriptures, angelic messengers, and Spirit-endowed spokespersons, and above all through Jesus” (383). The divine voice coming from the cloud is the first direct communication to people other than Jesus in the Lukan narrative.

In Mark and Matthew, the visionary aspect of the experience is focused solely on the disciples.¹²⁶ Luke's version comprises two dream-vision scenes,¹²⁷ as the three disciples appear to wake up in the middle of a vision thus far experienced only by Jesus.¹²⁸ As with the descent of

¹²⁶ Mark and Matthew are nearly identical on this point: καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν ... καὶ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἡλίας σὺν Μωϋσεὶ καὶ ἦσαν συλλαλοῦντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ (Mark 9:2-3); καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν ... καὶ ἰδοὺ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας συλλαλοῦντες μετ' αὐτοῦ (Matt 17:2-3). In both versions the repetition of the plural pronoun emphasizes Peter, John, and James as the recipients of the vision from the beginning.

¹²⁷ Although Nolland does not specify these scenes as two separate dream-visions, he does observe that "Luke has effectively divided the account into a first section, which focuses exclusively on Jesus (vv. 28-31), and ... a second section, which is concerned with the experience of the disciples (vv. 32-36)" (*Luke*, 2:500).

¹²⁸ So also Kremer, *Lukasevangelium*, 108. As Schürmann observes: "Dieser Geheimnischarakter wird auch dadurch verdeutlicht, daß die drei Jünger währenddessen βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ waren, von der Verklärung und der Erscheinung der beiden Männer bisher nichts wahrgenommen und das Gespräch nicht gehört haben—infolgedessen auch die ganze Situation nicht verstehen" (*Lukasevangelium*, 1:558). The NRSV translation suggests a different interpretation: "Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but *since they had stayed awake*, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him" (9:32 [emphasis mine]). This translation employs a causal interpretation of the participle διαγορηγορήσαντες; see also Bovon, *Luke* 1, 377. This interpretation almost requires the addition to v. 30, "Suddenly they saw ...," even though there is nothing of this sort in the Greek text. The fact that διαγορηγορεω is a *hapax* in the GNT and is never used in the LXX, makes the interpretation of v. 32 more difficult. There is nothing in the Greek text, however, that necessitates or particularly supports the causal interpretation of the participle. Indeed, the syntax of 9:32a supports the alternative reading that the disciples were asleep: ἦσαν βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ ("had been sleeping soundly" [lit. "had been weighed down with sleep"]). Luke uses ὕπνος only twice: once here and once to describe Eutychus (Acts 20:9). Green prefers the NRSV reading of the participle, which supports his interpretation of this scene: "the change Luke describes is a disclosure of Jesus' status—not to Jesus ... not to Luke's audience ... but to Jesus' followers" (380 [see also 383 n. 103]). Tannehill, on the other hand, offers a fairly bold interpretation that is closer to my own: "Here we find an explicit reference to future events which integrates the transfiguration scene into the larger narrative and enables it to serve as preview for the reader and as *preparation for Jesus*" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:223 [emphasis mine]). Earlier in his commentary, Tannehill suggests that Luke presents development in the character of Jesus: "It may seem doubtful that an ancient author would present one who is the Son of God as recognizing that relationship gradually through a process of development. However, the frame within which the narrator places the episode of the boy Jesus in the temple supports this interpretation... . The scene of the boy in the temple is meant to be a demonstration of Jesus' growing wisdom and of the special favor of God that rests upon him. That being so, we should note that the second refrain of growth [Luke 2:52] follows this scene... . We should consider, then, whether some of the following scenes which speak of Jesus as God's Son imply a deepening understanding of the implications of this special position" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:55-56). This assessment allows one to follow Luke's narrative cues and grapple with the fact that Jesus alone seems to experience this part of the vision in Luke's account.

the Spirit in the baptism scene, Jesus' transformation occurs while he is praying (Luke 9:29; cf. 3:21).¹²⁹ Also unique to Luke is the explanation for the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Whereas the other versions portray the appearance of these two figures and the fact that they converse with Jesus, only Luke elaborates on the subject of the discussion—Jesus' ἔξοδος. Again, it is significant that in the Lukan narrative the description of this conversation occurs before the disciples awaken.¹³⁰

Jesus' own response to this experience is difficult to detect, especially since he has already predicted the passion (9:22). Once the disciples awaken, the focus shifts completely to their perspective of the experience; there is no reaction by Jesus in the immediate context. It is possible to read a delayed reaction in the uniquely Lukan statement in 9:51: "When the time for his ascension approached, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."¹³¹ In any case, this portion of the vision, experienced only by Jesus in Luke, bears some similarity to the visitation of the angel in Luke 22:43–44.¹³²

In all the synoptic accounts, Peter alone responds to the sight of Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus; Peter alone suggests that it is

¹²⁹ That Luke is emphasizing some kind of parallel between these two scenes is strengthened by the presence of εἶδος in both passages, a term found nowhere else in Luke-Acts. On the significance of prayer preceding important events in Luke-Acts, see Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 1:56); Green even notes the syntactic significance: "In fact, through the use of the participial form, Luke has it that *while Jesus was praying* he was transfigured (cf. 3:21–22)" (380).

¹³⁰ That this first part of the vision seems to involve only Jesus, and that Jesus converses with Moses and Elijah about his impending ἔξοδος, militate against Joseph B. Tyson's suggestion that this scene "serves as a symbolic narrative that tells the reader about the proper roles and relationships of Moses [i.e., the Torah], Elijah [i.e., the prophets], and Jesus" ("Jews and Judaism in Luke-Acts: Reading as a Godfearer," *NTS* 41 [1995]: 28). Luke's alterations do not resonate with an attempt to render this scene as primarily symbolic, showing that "Peter's mistake is in placing Moses, Elijah, and Jesus on the same level" (29).

¹³¹ This is also suggested by Tannehill: "Jesus is seeking and being given the clarity of purpose which will enable him to 'set his face to go to Jerusalem'" (*Narrative Unity*, 1:225). Oddly, Nolland seems to reverse the sequence, with the understanding of 9:51 already in place at the transfiguration: "The heavenly visitors have confirmed the place of the trip to Jerusalem to die, but Peter would arrest the action at this point" (*Luke*, 2:501).

¹³² So also Nolland: "There is, finally, a curious, and hard to interpret, link to the Gethsemane scene of prayer (22:39–46) ... [linking] the baptism, the transfiguration, and the praying in Gethsemane as the three specific points in Luke where the divine guidance of Jesus' life becomes visible as supernatural event" (*Luke*, 2:503).

good for them to be on the mountain, and that they should build three σκηναί. The Lukan version, however, may offer a context for this statement. Only in Luke does the narrative indicate that Moses and Elijah were departing (καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ [9:33]) when Peter spoke. Taken together with the narrative aside later in v. 33—"without really understanding what he was saying"—this depicts Peter in a very different light than the other Synoptics.¹³³ Peter seems to be grasping at the moment.¹³⁴ He misunderstands the vision, misinterprets the experience, and wants to do something to keep Moses and Elijah there.

Fear strikes the disciples in each version, but this occurs at different points. The narrator of Mark notes their fear in the explanation of Peter's statement (9:6). In Matthew, the disciples do not become afraid until after they hear the voice from the cloud. Luke depicts their fear coming as the cloud envelopes them, at the moment when the setting changes from the presumably beatific vision of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah standing in brightness and glory to the presence of an all-encompassing cloud.

Luke's most glaring difference, of course, comes at the end of the scene. In the other accounts, Jesus commands the disciples to tell no one about this experience until after the Son of Man has been raised.¹³⁵ The Lukan version differs, saying only that the disciples themselves kept silent, telling no one at the time what they had seen. In Mark and Matthew, there is a command, a reason why, and so the disciples' silence seems reasonable. In all three Synoptics, the transfiguration is placed immediately between Jesus' first two passion predictions. The significance is fairly obvious, as all accounts end with God's command for the disciples to listen to Jesus.¹³⁶ The end of the Lukan account is, therefore, all the more significant. Peter's early enthusiasm, borne of misunderstanding, has been quieted. In its wake, the disciples are only afraid—so afraid that they tell no one at the time what they have

¹³³ In Mark, Peter's response is explained as a desperate statement *caused* by Peter's fear: "he did not know how to respond, for they were afraid" (Mark 9:6). Matthew's version makes no explanation for Peter's utterance.

¹³⁴ So also Nolland (*Luke*, 2:501) and Green (*Gospel of Luke*, 383).

¹³⁵ Mark 9:9 and Matt 17:9.

¹³⁶ The divine disclosure in Luke 9:35 clearly parallels the baptism passage in 3:21–22. In that context, it is unclear whether anyone other than Jesus hears the voice from heaven. In 9:35, the voice is directed not to Jesus, but to the disciples.

seen. Far from obviating human interpretation of God's will, this vision scene ends with an abiding lack of understanding, and the fear that results.¹³⁷ The voice has just told them exactly what to do, but they cannot comprehend what has happened.

"I was watching Satan fall" (Luke 10:17–20)

17 Ὑπέστρεψαν δὲ οἱ ἑβδομήκοντα [δύο] μετὰ χαρᾶς λέγοντες· κύριε, καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ὑποτάσσεται ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου. 18 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς· ἐθεώρουν τὸν σατανᾶν ὡς ἄστραπην ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα. 19 ἰδοὺ δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφεων καὶ σκορπίων, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, καὶ οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ. 20 πλὴν ἐν τούτῳ μὴ χαίρετε ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται, χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

17 The seventy [-two]¹³⁸ returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. 18 He said to them, "I was watching¹³⁹ Satan fall like a flash of lightning from heaven.¹⁴⁰ 19 Behold, I have given you the authority to walk upon snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will ever harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice because spirits submit to you, but because your names have been written in heaven."

Jesus' response to the seventy is probably an allusion to Isa 14:12.¹⁴¹ If this is correct, Luke's appropriation of the prophetic passage is quite

¹³⁷ So also Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 1:225). Green views the end of this scene rather differently, suggesting that here the disciples are "beginning" to understand and comprehend what is happening (*Gospel of Luke*, 377 and 384–385). Especially given the narrative comment at 9:45, Green's interpretation seems more difficult to support.

¹³⁸ On the competing textual evidence, see Bruce M. Metzger, "Seventy or Seventy-two Disciples?" (*NTS* 5 [1958–1959]: 299–306). Susan Garrett evaluates the possible allusions suggested by Metzger, concluding that this is most likely an allusion to Num 11:16–25 (*Demise*, 47–48 n. 41).

¹³⁹ Exploring the possibility that ἐθεώρουν is a third plural, rather than a first singular, Julian V. Hills has suggested an alternative translation: "they [i.e., the demons] saw Satan fall ..." ("Luke 10.18—Who Saw Satan Fall?" *JSNVT* 46 [1992]: 25–40). This translation yields a nice parallel between 10:17 and 10:18. Although I am not convinced sufficiently to adopt this translation, Hills' argument is both plausible and intriguing.

¹⁴⁰ Equally possible is the translation "I saw Satan falling from heaven like a flash of lightning." See also Nolland, *Luke*, 2:563.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 2:89 (and *contra* Nolland, *Luke*, 2:563). Garrett has noted that this passage in Isaiah is also associated with Satan in the roughly contemporary *L.A.E. (Vita)* 12:1–13:2 (*Demise*, 40 n. 20). Although there are no exact lexical parallels, the reference to "trampling over snakes and scorpions" may be an allusion to Ps. 91:13.

interesting.¹⁴² What was originally a מִשְׁלׁ (‘‘parable’’) ¹⁴³ or θροῖνος (‘‘dirge’’) ‘‘against the King of Babylon’’ (Isa 14:4)—a declaration of reversal in the realm of human political power—now becomes a declaration of reversal on a more cosmic scale couched in visionary language. What is declared by the seventy [-two] as a victory over demons on earth is described by Jesus in even broader cosmic terms.¹⁴⁴ Most of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts are limited to the earthly realm.¹⁴⁵ Jesus’ vision in 10:18, like the temptation scene, is more apocalyptic

¹⁴² Green argues that this passage is pivotal for understanding how the expectations established by the words of Zechariah come to fulfillment in the narrative: ‘‘Because Luke-Acts does not document Israel’s rescue from Rome, Zechariah’s words have puzzled some readers of Luke. [In Luke 10:18], however, a key interpretive move is introduced. This is the explicit identification of Satan as the real ‘enemy’ [cf. ἐχθρός in Acts 13:10] that is to be overcome. Rome is not the adversary, only one of its partners. . . . When it is recognized that Luke identifies ‘the enemy’ as the cosmic power of evil resident and active behind all forms of opposition to God and God’s people, it is plain that Zechariah’s hope has not been dashed but clarified and, indeed, radicalized’’ (*Gospel of Luke*, 419–420 [including note 74]).

¹⁴³ This is rendered ‘‘taunt’’ in the NRSV.

¹⁴⁴ Werner Georg Kümmel goes so far as to assert: ‘‘Now Jesus can have meant by this one thing only, that he has seen the defeat accomplished in the fight he is waging victoriously against the devils. So here too it is quite firmly established that the eschatological consummation, the Kingdom of God, has already become a present reality in the ministry of Jesus’’ (*Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (2nd ed.; trans. Dorothea Barton; London: SCM, 1961), 114). Garrett takes a more cautious approach, assessing this vision scene from number of different angles (*Demise*, 46–57). From a temporal perspective, she is hesitant to accept Jesus’ vision as an event contemporaneous with the missionary success of the seventy [-two]. She prefers the notion that this represents an earlier prophetic vision that Jesus relates in response to their report of success. Understandably, a precise interpretation of Luke’s understanding of Satan’s fall is crucial for Garrett. She argues that it is unlikely that Luke is presenting Satan’s fall in 10:18 as a *fait accompli*. Other contemporaneous Jewish texts (e.g., 1QM and 11QM^{elch}) feature heavenly battle scenes, in which demonic powers are toppled by the righteous. Drawing on such traditions, Garrett surmises that: ‘‘Jesus’ reference to Satan’s fall (Luke 10:18) anticipates an event destined to occur when Jesus is raised to God’s right hand, to the place that Satan now occupies’’ (53). Nolland offers a similar argument on slightly different grounds, suggesting that Jesus’ vision in this verse be understood in the context of prophetic visions of the OT: ‘‘Not what is, or what has now happened in heaven, but what is to be, appears in the prophet’s visionary experience. . . . Jesus reports a vision identifying the content of his own mission. In vision he has seen the coming triumph of the kingdom of God over the rule of Satan and has identified this triumph as his own task’’ (*Luke*, 364). Less appealing than either Kümmel’s or Garrett’s is the argument of Joel Marcus that Luke 10:18 ‘‘originally described a vision that Jesus experienced at his baptism’’ (‘‘Jesus’ Baptismal Vision,’’ *NTS* 41 [1995]: 516). Given the narrative framework of Luke 10, there is no reason to assume that ‘‘Luke 10:18 is a vision without a setting’’ (516).

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, the annunciations to Zechariah and Mary in Luke 1, the visitation to the shepherds in Luke 2, the visions to Saul and Peter in Acts 9–10, etc. An

than most of the Lukan dream-visions.¹⁴⁶ The cosmic significance of this event is emphasized in Jesus' reproof that his disciples not rejoice over what they have experienced on earth, but that they rejoice because their names have been written in heaven. This emphasis continues in what may be regarded as Jesus' response to this entire scene in vv. 21–24.

Luke connects the next scene in a vivid way: "*In that very hour*, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" (10:21). What follows is a rather interesting prayer. "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the erudite and have revealed them to infants" (10:21).¹⁴⁷ References to God as "Lord of heaven and earth" or "creator of heaven and earth" are common in Acts.¹⁴⁸ This is the only such reference, however, in the Gospel. This appellation, combined with the use of the verb ἀποκαλύπτω, further emphasizes the apocalyptic quality of the entire passage, but does so in a surprising way.

Jesus' prayer and statement about himself as the only one who can "reveal" the Father (10:22), are followed by a series of assertions made to the disciples "privately" (κατ' ἰδίαν). Jesus tells them: "Blessed are the eyes seeing the things that you see ... for ... many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and did not see it, and hear what you hear and did not hear it" (10:23–24). This conclusion provides an interesting twist on the apocalyptic imagery mentioned above. Rather

exception is the opening of heaven and the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism. See also Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 185.

¹⁴⁶ Garrett describes this as "an unabashedly apocalyptic scene in the midst of a document not usually considered to be 'apocalyptic'" (*Demise*, 46). Rudolf Bultmann's discussion of this passage also requires attention (*The History of the Synoptic Tradition* [rev. ed.; trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972], 108–109). Observing that Luke 10:18 represents the only "saying" in the synoptic tradition that "could be classed as a vision report," Bultmann notes that other such vision passages could have been suppressed by later tradition. He discounts this possibility, however, arguing: "Yet that could not have been done on any large scale; for in late Judaism visions and auditions were features of the apocalypticist, and Jesus was not an apocalypticist in the strict sense." Here, Bultmann is addressing the question of whether this saying is authentic. Arguments over authenticity, or *ipsissima verba* are not the focus of the present investigation. However, two issues must be noted. First, it is incorrect to equate visions with apocalyptic theology; they are certainly related, but visions occur frequently outside of apocalyptic literature. Second, the rarity of apocalyptic imagery in Luke-Acts does not reduce its significance.

¹⁴⁷ Green regards this juxtaposition of "wise" and "infants" as a continuation of the reversal motif established in the Magnificat (*Gospel of Luke*, 422).

¹⁴⁸ See Acts 4:24; 7:49; 14:15; 17:24.

than fixing on the heavenly realm, Jesus' prayer and statements to his disciples focus on what they are experiencing on earth, and the cosmic significance of these events.

Understanding the relationship between the vision in 10:18 and the perception of God's will requires that one take this broader context into account. The apocalyptic vision Jesus relates to the missionary success of the disciples is turned around in Jesus' subsequent prayer and instruction. Although it is Jesus who sees the vision described in 10:18, Jesus praises God for "revealing" these things to his disciples. He then admonishes these same disciples regarding the significance of what *they* have seen. What began as a vision experienced by Jesus is now indicative of the special privilege being experienced by the disciples: they are privy to God working out God's plan in overcoming spiritual opposition.¹⁴⁹

Angel on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46)

39 Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη κατὰ τὸ ἔθος εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν, ἠκολούθησαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταί. 40 γενόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν. 41 καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπεσπάσθη ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὥσεί λίθου βολὴν καὶ θεῖς τὰ γόνατα προσηύχετο 42 λέγων· πάτερ, εἰ βούλει παρένεγκε τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· πλὴν μὴ τὸ θέλημά μου ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω. 43¹⁵⁰ [[ᾠφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐνισχύων

¹⁴⁹ Kee takes this one step further: "knowledge of the divine purpose has been revealed to them. . . . The divine gift of revelation is essential, therefore, to discern what the meaning of Jesus and his works are in the divine purpose for the covenant people and for the creation" (*Miracle*, 207).

¹⁵⁰ Luke 22:43–44 are bracketed in both NA²⁷ and in most translations. The manuscript evidence supporting the exclusion of these verses is considerable (e.g., P⁷⁵, B, A). Bruce M. Metzger notes the probability that these verses are a later addition, but also observes their importance for the textual tradition, which is the reason for their bracketed inclusion in the text (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994], 151). The presence of these verses in the original reading of Codex $\mathfrak{N}$ and some other witnesses requires attention. Positing the idea that Luke is here adapting non-Markan source material, Joel Green suggests that these verses fit the profile of Lukan redaction ("Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46): Tradition and Theology," *JNT* 26 [1986]: 35–36). A more extensive evaluation supporting the inclusion of these verses on stylistic and structural grounds is provided by Brown (*Death of the Messiah From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994], 1:179–190). Since such compelling arguments have been offered for the inclusion of these verses in Luke's Gospel, and since this passage clearly meets the criteria of a vision scene, it is included in the present study. For an argument favoring the exclusion of these verses, and a survey of relevant scholarship on this position, see Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1081–1082.

αὐτόν. 44 καὶ γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἔκτενέστερον προσήυχετο· καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἰδρὼς αὐτοῦ ὥσει θρόμβοι αἵματος καταβαίνοντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν.]] 45 καὶ ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς ἐλθὼν πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς εὗρεν κοιμωμένους αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, 46 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί καθεύδετε; ἀναστάντες προσ-
εὔχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθῃτε εἰς πειρασμόν.

39 Departing, he went to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom. His disciples followed him. 40 Coming to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you not enter into the time of testing.” 41 He himself went about a stone’s throw from them, knelt down, and began to pray. 42 He said, “Father, if you would, remove this cup from me; but let your will be done, not mine.” 43 [[An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. 44 Being in agony, he prayed more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling upon the ground.]] 45 Getting up from prayer and going to his disciples, he found them asleep from sorrow. 46 He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you not enter into the time of testing.”

This passage is unlike any other angelic visitation in the Gospel, specifically because the angel does not *say* anything. The Markan and Matthean versions of the temptation include angelic ministrations at the end,¹⁵¹ but this facet is absent from the Lukan temptation scene. In Luke 22, the angel appears at a crucial point in the story when Jesus has prayed for the “cup” to pass from him.¹⁵² Although angelic visitations elsewhere in the Gospel provide a message for the visionary recipient, here the angel’s purpose is to “strengthen” Jesus.¹⁵³ Just as the angel says nothing, Jesus says nothing in the narrative about the angel’s ministration. Although strengthened, Jesus still experiences “agony,” which is described graphically in v. 44.

When viewed against the background of the baptism scene (3:21–22) and the transfiguration (9:28–36), this visitation fits well within Luke’s presentation of Jesus. In both of the earlier scenes, Jesus himself receives some form of divine authentication of his message and his mission. The differences between the Lukan account of this scene and the other synoptic versions are telling. In Mark, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John

¹⁵¹ See Mark 1:13 and Matt 4:11.

¹⁵² Green has observed: “references to the divine will and the motif of angelic intervention highlight the eschatological and cosmic repercussions of this scene” (*Gospel of Luke*, 778).

¹⁵³ The verb ἐνισχύω is found only twice in the NT. Used here and to describe the aftermath of Saul’s vision in Acts 9:19, this verb is found more frequently in the LXX. Most notably, it is used in Dan 10:19 (LXX [Theodotion] Dan 10:18 and 19) to describe the strength Daniel receives from the heavenly intermediary. Grundmann notes similar angelic strengthening of martyrs in rabbinic literature (*Evangelium nach Lukas*, 412).

a little further with him and expresses his grief to them (14:33–34). Matthew retains this action and even adds a phrase that would seem to indicate that Jesus is seeking comfort from these three: “stay here and keep awake with me” (Matt 26:38). Luke omits the inclusion of the three altogether. As with the baptism and transfiguration, authentication and strength come directly from a divine source in Luke’s version.

Resurrection Message, Report, and Disbelief (Luke 24:4–7)

4 καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἀπορεῖσθαι αὐτάς περὶ τούτου καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς ἐν ἐσθῇτι ἀστραπτούσῃ. 5 ἐμφόβων δὲ γενομένων αὐτῶν καὶ κλινουσῶν τὰ πρόσωπα εἰς τὴν γῆν εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτάς· τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν· 6 οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε, ἀλλὰ ἠγέρθη. μνησθητε ὡς ἐλάλησεν ὑμῖν ἔτι ὢν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ 7 λέγων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅτι δεῖ παραδοθῆναι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ σταυρωθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστῆναι. 8 καὶ ἐμνήσθησαν τῶν ῥημάτων αὐτοῦ. 9 Καὶ ὑποστρέψασαι ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου ἀπήγγειλαν ταῦτα πάντα τοῖς ἑνδεκα καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς λοιποῖς. 10 ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς. ἔλεγον πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ταῦτα, 11 καὶ ἐφάνησαν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ὥσει λῆρος τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα, καὶ ἠπίστουν αὐταῖς.

4 While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men stood beside them in gleaming clothes. 5 When the women became afraid and bent their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why are you seeking the one who lives among the dead? 6 He is not here. He has been raised. Remember how he used to say to you when he was still in Galilee 7 that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful people and be crucified, and rise on the third day.” 8 They remembered his words, and when they had returned they announced all these things to the eleven and all the rest. 10 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the rest of the women who were with them, were relating these things to the apostles. 11 To the apostles, however, these words seemed like nonsense, and they did not believe the women.

This final dream-vision scene in the Gospel¹⁵⁴ lacks some of the formal features of dream-visions often employed by Luke. The fear expressed by the women, for example, is not assuaged (cf. Luke 1:13, 1:30, 2:10).

¹⁵⁴ I am not including in this analysis appearances of the risen Jesus. Because of the presentation of Jesus’ conception and birth in the infancy narrative, the repeated emphasis on Jesus as God’s Son, and his ability to work miracles, one can suggest that Jesus is never presented as an “ordinary” person in Luke-Acts. Therefore, it would be awkward to treat appearances of Jesus following the resurrection as special vision scenes.

Most important, the figures are described by the narrator as “men” (ἄνδρες). There are two reasons for including this passage among the dream-vision scenes of Luke.¹⁵⁵ First, the narrative description of their appearance suggests that these figures are not “ordinary” people. The image of “men in shining garments” recurs in Acts 1:10. In both of these passages, the role of these figures is to give information not available to human characters in the text. The image also recurs in Cornelius’ description of his own visionary experience: “behold a man (ἄνθρωπος) stood before me in shining garments” (Acts 10:30).¹⁵⁶ This “man” had been described by the narrator of Acts as an “angel of God” (ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ) who appeared to Cornelius “in a vision” (ἐν ὁράματι [Acts 10:3]). Second, the Lukan narrative will recapitulate the women’s experience as a vision scene a few verses later: “they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels (ὁπτασίαν ἀγγέλων), who said that he was alive” (Luke 24:23).

The response to this vision is two-fold: the women respond to the vision itself, and then other characters respond to the women’s vision report. The narrative relates very simply the response of the women at the tomb. They are scared by the sudden presence of the two “men,” and bow their faces to the ground. When the visionary figures tell them to remember the Lord’s own passion prediction, the women do “remember his words” and return to report what they have experienced.¹⁵⁷ More interesting is the second response. There is no ambiguity as to the women’s audience. Although others are present, vv. 9 and 10 stress that the women are relating their experience to the eleven, to the apostles, first described as such in Luke 6:13–16. What is striking is

¹⁵⁵ Green offers a similar assessment, noting both of the reasons given below (*Gospel of Luke*, 837).

¹⁵⁶ A different adjective or participle is used to describe the clothing in each case, but the connection in Luke-Acts seems to center on the visionary aspect of the experience (as Acts 10:30 compared with Acts 10:3 would indicate).

¹⁵⁷ As Green has pointed out, it is significant that the women in this scene are not treated as messengers, but as disciples: “Importantly, the women are given no commission, but are themselves treated as recipients of Jesus’ words and summoned simply to authentic understanding... . The women are not instructed to bear witness to what they had experienced and the new insight they now shared, but they do so spontaneously (cf. Acts 4:20)” (*Gospel of Luke*, 838). Tannehill reads this passage very differently. Instead of viewing the women’s testimony as a “spontaneous,” faithful response, Tannehill asserts: “Since Jesus’ words have now been fulfilled, they should be believed, but the empty tomb and the angels’ announcement do not bring insight and faith... . The empty tomb and the message of the angels produce only amazement and unbelief” (*Narrative Unity*, 1:278–279).

that the “chosen”¹⁵⁸ apostles, with the sole exception of Peter, respond in a decisively negative manner.¹⁵⁹ Employing a term found only here in biblical literature, Luke says that they regard the women’s report as “nonsense” (λῆρος).¹⁶⁰ Even Peter must see the empty tomb for himself before expressing amazement over what has taken place.¹⁶¹

The apostles’ reaction raises an important question for this discussion. In Luke-Acts, the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God’s will extends beyond the perception of the characters who experience dream-visions directly. In Luke 24, the message given in a dream-vision is shared with other characters. The women’s perception of God’s will leads to testimony given to the apostles. Despite this witness, the apostles themselves disregard the message. Far from obviating the role of human interpretation, the visionary experience of these women is rejected outright by those whom Jesus himself chose. Only Peter, based on his own experience, begins to wonder at what has happened. Ultimately, this negative response is reproached by the risen Jesus, who addresses the Emmaus travelers as “fools, slow in heart to believe all that the prophets said” (Luke 24:25).

Conclusion

Luke’s Gospel presents a wide variety of visionary scenes, and an even wider variety of responses to these experiences. Gabriel’s announcements to Zechariah and Mary lead to dramatic interpretations of what these experiences portend. Far from obviating human perception, these

¹⁵⁸ See the use of ἐκλέγομαι in 6:13.

¹⁵⁹ This is particularly important given the observation of Tannehill that the overlapping chapters of Luke 24 and Acts 1 serve as a transition between Jesus and his witnesses (*Narrative Unity*, 1:277). It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the first testimony of Jesus’ resurrection is dismissed by the very figures he chose.

¹⁶⁰ Green notes the use of this term in medical texts (*Gospel of Luke*, 839 n. 14). One of the only other occurrences in Hellenistic Jewish literature may also be helpful. In 4 Macc 5:11, when Antiochus has Jews tortured until they concede to eat pork, he says the following to the old priest, Eleazar: οὐκ ἐξυπνώσεις ἀπὸ τῆς φλυάρου φιλοσοφίας ὑμῶν καὶ ἀποσκεδάσεις τῶν λογισμῶν σου τὸν λῆρον καὶ ἄξιον τῆς ἡλικίας ἀναλαβὼν νοῦν φιλοσοφήσεις τὴν τοῦ συμφέροντος ἀλήθειαν (“Will you not awaken from your silly philosophy, dismiss the nonsense of your reasoning, and, taking up a mindset worthy of your age, consider thoughtfully the truth of what is advantageous?”).

¹⁶¹ Noting the evidence that the testimony of women was avoided whenever possible in antiquity, Green regards Peter’s willingness to go to the tomb more positively (*Gospel of Luke*, 840 n. 16).

visions result in the *mis*interpretation of God's plan for the ministries of John and Jesus. Thus, these visions have the greatest impact on the remainder of the narrative, as Luke appropriates the language of the Magnificat and Benedictus in the process of reshaping the understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the expected messiah. In striking contrast to the complex vision scenes in Luke 1, the shepherds' response to their own angelic visitation in 2:9–14 is devoid of interpretation; when the shepherds decide to go to Bethlehem, it is to see what they are certain has already happened (2:15). Many visions in the remainder of the Gospel serve in some way to provide divine authentication for Jesus or encouragement for his mission.¹⁶² Those that do involve other characters—the transfiguration and the experience of the women at the empty tomb—seem to end rather unpredictably. Again, far from obviating the role of human perception, these experiences result in incomprehension and disbelief. There is no perceptible pattern to the Lukan vision scenes. The reader finds no simple development of disclosure and understanding through dream-visions. Instead, characters respond to these experiences in a variety of ways. Some simply assume that the visionary message is true; others struggle to interpret what they have seen and heard. This variety of visions and character responses expands in the Acts of the Apostles, to which we now turn.

¹⁶² See, for example, the divine sanction addressed directly to Jesus: “*You* are my son, the beloved; I am pleased with *you*” (3:22).

CHAPTER FIVE

DREAM-VISIONS IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

In both the Gospel and Acts, the primary focus of Luke's story is God and what God is doing in the human realm. In the Gospel, Luke emphasizes the role of Jesus as the Anointed One of God. In Acts, the emphasis shifts to the followers of Jesus, and how they understand what God is doing in their midst.¹ Luke's use of dream-visions in Acts mirrors this larger shift in the two-part narrative. Whereas all of the visions in the Gospel have something to do with Jesus, the visions in Acts are more disparate. The risen Lord is directly involved in some of these encounters (Acts 1:10; 7:56; 9:3–6; 18:9–10; 23:11). In others, one finds an "angel of the Lord" (Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7, 23), or an "angel of God" (10:3; 27:23). Still others feature the Holy Spirit (2:1–4; 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; 19:21; 21:4, 11).² Variety similarly marks the character responses to these visionary experiences.

In some cases, characters respond to their visions with some confusion and later offer dramatic interpretations of these experiences (e.g., Saul and Peter). These interpretations in turn permit the reader a glimpse of the characters' perception of God's will as it relates to their visions. In other instances, characters may respond so automatically to divine commands that the reader is left without any picture of the process of discernment (e.g., Philip). Still other passages reveal even more subtle elements of perception, particularly those that feature the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the way that this guidance is understood differently by different characters in the narrative.

This chapter will examine the salient features of each dream-vision in Acts and its role in the narrative context. The discussion will focus on character reactions and responses to dream-visions as indications of the

¹ In the context of this assertion I am referring not only to the mention of "God" (θεός) in the text, but also to the activity of both the Spirit and Jesus.

² There are two dream-visions in Acts that do not fit neatly within these categories, but instead feature human intermediaries. As noted in chapter 3, Paul's dream-vision at Troas contains no divine, or otherworldly, figure. Along these lines, Ananias' vision in Acts 9 includes a statement from the Lord that Saul is having a concurrent vision—a vision in which a man named Ananias lays hands on Saul so that he might regain his sight (9:12).

perception of God's will. Because they occupy the most narrative space, the repeated accounts of Saul's conversion/call and the Cornelius–Peter episode will also occupy the bulk of this discussion.

Dream-Visions and the Early Witness in Jerusalem

The Angelic Message to the Apostles (Acts 1:10–12)

10 καὶ ὡς ἀπενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο παρειστήκεισαν αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐσθήσεσι λευκαῖς, 11 οἱ καὶ εἶπαν· ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι, τί ἐστήκατε βλέποντες³ εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; οὗτος ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀναλημφθεὶς ἀπ' ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν οὕτως ἐλεύσεται ὃν τρόπον ἐθεάσασθε αὐτὸν πορευόμενον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. 12 Τότε ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἀπὸ ὁδὸς τοῦ καλουμένου Ἑλαιῶνος, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐγγὺς Ἱερουσαλὴμ σαββάτου ἔχον ὁδόν.

10 As they were gazing into heaven during his ascent, behold two men stood near them in shining garments. 11 They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way you saw him depart.” 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—just a Sabbath day's journey away.

Along with other features of Acts 1, this passage creates a strong connection between the end of Luke's Gospel and the beginning of Acts. In both Luke 24 and Acts 1, characters encounter two angelic messengers (cf. Luke 24:4).⁴ The messages of the angels are also remarkably similar. In each case, they question what the human characters are doing (“Why are you seeking the living among the dead?” [Luke

³ Some ancient witnesses (e.g., P⁵⁶, $\aleph^C$, A, C) read ἐμβλέποντες. I am following, instead, Codex B and the original reading of Codex $\aleph$.

⁴ On regarding these characters as angels, see the discussion of Luke 24:4–7 in chapter 4. Based on scriptural statements like Deut 19:15 and John 8:17 (both of which highlight the importance of having the testimony of two [or more] witnesses), Talbert suggests: “The promise, moreover, is made not by one but by two angels, insuring its truthfulness” (*Reading Acts*, 28). Although one should indeed question why two figures appear in Luke 24:4–7 and Acts 1:10–11, it is highly doubtful that Luke is here doubling witnesses to show what is *really* truthful. Such a reading casts the appearances of Gabriel in Luke 1 and the multiple appearances of “an angel of God/the Lord” in Acts in a very dubious light. It is perhaps more helpful to think in terms of the two figures mentioned in the transfiguration scene (Luke 9:28–36 [so Johnson, *Acts*, 31]).

24:5]; “Why are you standing here looking into heaven?” [Acts 1:11]).⁵ Given these similarities, the differences between the two angelic messages and the reactions of the characters are all the more striking. In the Gospel account, Luke says that the women not only become afraid, but even bow their faces to the ground (Luke 24:5). After the angelic message in 24:6–7, the narrator of the Gospel also relates that the women “remembered [Jesus’] words” (24:8). They then report their experience to the apostles (Luke 24:9–11), who dismiss their story as nonsense. The corresponding story in Acts lacks these features. The apostles’ dismissal of the women’s filtered vision report in Luke 24 stands in contrast to their simple acceptance of the message in Acts 1. Like the shepherds of Luke 2, the apostles obediently follow the angels’ instructions (1:12).⁶

Most notable in this account is the absence of fear. With the exception of the visions experienced by Jesus, *all* of the visions in the Gospel inspire fear.⁷ The lack of such a reaction here, therefore, is all the more important. Re-reading Acts with this issue in mind, one notices that the omission of fear in this passage is the beginning of a pattern that will continue throughout the remainder of Luke’s story. Like Jesus, believ-

⁵ Tannehill highlights the similarities between these two visionary episodes (*Narrative Unity*, 2:19). Both passages feature “two men,” and describe something special about their clothing. In both passages, the figures also question and correct the actions of the characters in the scene. This “correction” has received attention from a number of scholars. Haenchen argued that the disciples are rebuked because their gazing into heaven expresses “imminent expectation” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 150). Tannehill suggests instead that this reproof be read in light of the servant parables in Luke’s Gospel as a “call to action” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:19). Gaventa observes a pattern, beginning in Acts 1:6 with the disciples’ question to Jesus. This question about the restoration of the kingdom is rejected in 1:7. The disciples then gaze into the sky as though wondering when Jesus will return (1:10), only to have this subsequent question rejected by the heavenly figures (*Acts*, 62). Others downplay the rebuke, reading this scene as a sign of blessing. Spencer, for example, describes Acts 1:10–11 as a limited “glimpse” into heaven that offers some sort of authentication for their ministries: “To be sure, they catch only a glimpse, nothing like the elaborate visions witnessed by certain apocalyptic seers... . But in this glimpse the disciples receive a vital sign of heavenly blessing on their impending tour of duty throughout the earth” (*Acts*, 27).

⁶ Whether intentional or not, Haenchen’s description of 1:12 is interesting in the context of the different reactions between the two passages: “*Bowing to the angels’ words*, the disciples return to Jerusalem” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 150 [emphasis mine]). What is most intriguing about the angels’ comments is that they do not issue any command to the disciples. The disciples do not “[bow] to the angels’ words.” If anything, they are here obeying Jesus’ earlier commands that they remain in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 8).

⁷ See the discussion of fear as an occasional element of dream-vision scenes in chapter 4 (pp. 114–115). The only vision scene in the Gospel in which one finds a delayed fear reaction is the the transfiguration (Luke 9:34).

ers no longer exhibit fear in visionary encounters. Fear is a feature of some of the dream-visions in Acts, but only for those who are not yet followers of “the Way.”

The Coming of the⁸ Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4)

1 Καὶ ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς πεντηχοστῆς ἦσαν πάντες ὁμοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. 2 καὶ ἐγένετο ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἦχος ὥσπερ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν ὅλον τὸν οἶκον οὗ ἦσαν καθήμενοι 3 καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρὸς καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐφ’ ἓνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, 4 καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέροις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς.

1 When the day of Pentecost approached,⁹ they were all together in the same place. 2 Suddenly, there was a noise from heaven like that of a strong, driven wind and it filled the whole house where they were staying. 3 Tongues as of fire appeared to them, being divided and resting on each one of them. 4 They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to make declarations.

It is interesting to note that the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is accompanied—even preceded—in the narrative by a visionary experience characterized by sound filling the house and “tongues as of fire”¹⁰ appearing on each person. The differences between this and most other dream-vision scenes in Luke’s Gospel should catch the reader’s attention. For the most part, the visions in the Gospel involve angelic inter-

⁸ Fitzmyer observes that “Luke strangely uses no article with *pneumatōs hagiou*... . The first Christians are baptised with a Spirit by the wind and the tongues of fire that rest on each one” (Acts, 238).

⁹ This translation of συμπληρόω is not meant to contend with all of the standard translations indicating that the day of Pentecost “had come” (e.g., KJV, NASV, NRSV). Instead, I have translated it this way because of the clear transitional connection to Luke 9:51 (“when the time of his ascension approached, he set his face to go to Jerusalem” [see also Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:26]). Nothing in the context of Acts 2 specifically demands that the event described happened *on* the day of Pentecost.

¹⁰ Haenchen noted the use of the phrase “tongues of fire” in 1 En. 14 (*Acts of the Apostles*, 168 n. 2). This is interesting. In 1 En. the tongues of fire surround the outer wall of the house/palace inside of which Enoch finds the dwelling place of God. Inside, Enoch further describes the barrier of fire that makes it impossible to approach God (1 En. 8:22). Such a contrast makes the story of Pentecost all the more striking, since the fire in this scene is a sign of the filling of the Holy Spirit—the power that will allow the disciples to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8). Haenchen does not claim, however, that Luke was influenced by 1 En. in any way.

mediaries.¹¹ This vision bears some similarities to the two that do not involve such intermediaries: the descent of the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22), and the transfiguration (Luke 9:29–36). The language of Luke 3:22, in which the Spirit descends “in bodily form like (ὥς) a dove,” resembles the “tongues as (ὥσεῖ) of fire.” Similarly, there is a voice “from heaven” in Luke 3:22, whereas there is a noise “from heaven” in this passage. Taking into account the broader context, the fire imagery combined with the coming of the Holy Spirit is certainly an analeptic reference to John’s declaration that the one who is coming “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16).¹² Perhaps more interesting is the thread that joins the Pentecost scene to the transfiguration.¹³ This thread is the connection that both stories have with the Sinai theophany.

As noted in chapter 4, the transfiguration scene contains imagery evoking the Sinai theophany. The images there were the explicit mention of the exodus (ἐξοδος), the mountain (ὄρος), and the voice of God from the cloud (νεφέλη). The Pentecost scene, however, alludes to different aspects of the Sinai theophany. Although the term “noise” (ἦχος) does not occur in the Exodus account, the related verb ἠχέω describes the sound of the trumpet blast from Sinai that leaves the people trembling (LXX Exod 19:16).¹⁴ Two verses later, fire (πῦρ) is the guise in which God descends upon the mountain (Exod 19:18).¹⁵ Luke’s appropriation of this imagery is further underscored by the explicit mention of “Pentecost,” a festival at which it is likely that first-century Jews celebrated the giving of the Torah at Sinai.¹⁶

¹¹ Luke 1:8–20, 1:26–38, 2:8–15, 22:43–44, and 24:4–7. Of the other visions in the Gospel, two involve Satan (Luke 4:1–13, 10:18); although the reader may assume Satan is an angelic being, this is never made explicit in Luke-Acts (cf. 2Cor 11:14, 12:7; Rev 12:9).

¹² See also Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:26.

¹³ This brief discussion of connections between the Pentecost vision and the Gospel material is by no means exhaustive. Other evocative parallels include: the use of συμπληρώω in the statement about Jesus’ resolve to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51); and the use of διαμερίζω in the “eucharist” scene (Luke 22:17).

¹⁴ Johnson notes this connection, but does not distinguish between the noun and verb form (*Acts*, 42); Fitzmyer does (*Acts*, 238). See also Jervell’s comments on the connection between the Pentecost event and the Sinai theophany (*Apostelgeschichte*, 133).

¹⁵ On the use of fire in theophanies, see Johnson (*Acts*, 42). Another example of this image in Luke-Acts is found in Stephen’s recapitulation of the theophany to Moses (*Acts* 7:30).

¹⁶ Johnson, *Acts*, 45–47.

More significant than these similarities, however, is the primary difference between the Sinai theophany and what occurs at Pentecost. Based on the allusive nature of the Pentecost story in Acts 2, one might be tempted to liken the believers receiving the Spirit to Moses in the Sinai account. This interpretation has merit, but is complicated by the group emphasis in Acts: “they were all together in the same place” (2:1).¹⁷ What is so striking about this probable allusion to the Sinai story is the different reaction of the people. In Exod 19:16, the divine manifestation caused the people to tremble (πτοέω). Luke’s familiarity with πτοέω is unquestionable. Luke is the only NT writer to employ this verb, using it to describe the reaction of a gathering of believers when the risen Jesus appears to them in Luke 24:37.¹⁸ In Acts 2, however, the people do nothing of the sort. There is no fear or trembling (Exod 19:16; cf. Exod 20:18). Instead the people are *all* filled with the Holy Spirit, and begin to speak about the mighty deeds of God in the languages of all the pilgrims visiting Jerusalem (Acts 2:8, 11).

With this in mind, one can view the connections being made to the Sinai theophany more completely. Like the people trembling at Sinai, the gathered disciples tremble at the sight of the risen Lord in Luke 24:37. Now the reaction has changed. The people have become the Spirit-filled witnesses to God’s mighty acts, and it is the larger crowds gathered outside who mirror the “amazement” (ἐξίστημι) of the people at Sinai (Acts 2:7, 12; cf. LXX Exod 19:18).¹⁹ Now the connection between the disciples and Moses is more clear. Whereas Moses was the intermediary between the people and God at Sinai, now the corporate body of believers will serve in this intermediary capacity. It is they, speaking in myriad languages, who now extol God’s mighty deeds. Just as Moses is distinguished from the people by his lack of fear, so now are the disciples. Instead, they are empowered for their new role as witnesses.²⁰ The privileged role of Moses at Sinai now extends to all of the believers gathered together. Perhaps more important, one

¹⁷ See especially Gaventa, *Acts*, 74. Gaventa notes that the emphasis on both daughters and female slaves in Peter’s speech may serve as an indication that πάντες in Acts 2:1 signifies more than just the apostles.

¹⁸ The verb is also found in Luke 21:9.

¹⁹ The verb ἐξίστημι does occur elsewhere in Luke-Acts (Luke 2:47, 8:46, 24:22; Acts 8:9, 8:11, 8:13, 9:21, 10:45, 12:16), but the other close connections between Acts 2 and Exod 19 make a verbal allusion here very possible.

²⁰ See Acts 1:8.

of the pivotal moments of Israel's history—the giving of the Torah at Sinai—has now been appropriated as the parallel for the testimony these witnesses bear.

Luke does not end his description of this event with the ecstatic speech of the believers. Such a momentous occasion requires interpretation. As with the earlier visionary episodes in Luke-Acts, this one is interpreted by one of the characters who experiences this filling of the Holy Spirit.

The Coming of the Spirit Explained (Acts 2:12–21)

12 ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες καὶ διηπόρουν, ἄλλος πρὸς ἄλλον λέγοντες· τί θέλει τοῦτο εἶναι; 13 ἕτεροι δὲ διαγλευάζοντες ἔλεγον ὅτι γλεύκους μεμεστωμένοι εἰσίν. 14 Σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος σὺν τοῖς ἑνδεκα ἐπῆρεν τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπεφθέγγετο αὐτοῖς· ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ πάντες, τοῦτο ὑμῖν γνωστὸν ἔστω καὶ ἐνωτίσασθε τὰ ῥήματά μου. 15 οὐ γὰρ ὥς ὑμεῖς ὑπολαμβάνετε οὗτοι μεθύουσιν, ἔστιν γὰρ ὥρα τρίτη τῆς ἡμέρας, 16 ἀλλὰ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ εἰρημένον διὰ τοῦ προφήτου Ἰωήλ·

17 καὶ ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, λέγει ὁ θεός, ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα, καὶ προφητεύσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὁράσεις ὄψονται καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνυπνίοις ἐνυπνιασθήσονται· 18 καὶ γε²¹ ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου, καὶ προφητεύσουσιν. 19 καὶ δώσω τέρατα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ σημεῖα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κάτω, αἶμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ. 20 ὁ ἥλιος μεταστραφῆσεται εἰς σκότος καὶ ἡ σελήνη εἰς αἶμα, πρὶν ἔλθειν ἡμέραν κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ. 21 καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται.

12 All of them were amazed and confused, saying, one to another, “What does this mean?” 13 Sneering, others were saying, “They are full of new wine.” 14 But Peter stood with the eleven, raised his voice, and spoke to them: “Judeans and all who are visiting Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen carefully to my words. 15 These people are not drunk, as you imagine, for it is nine o’clock in the morning.²² 16 Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

²¹ When analyzing the alterations to the text (see below), it is also important to note the probability that Luke is working with a recension of the LXX. The strongest supporting evidence for this is the reading of καὶ γε in 2:18 (καὶ in the LXX), for the Hebrew כִּי (see Dominique Barthélemy’s discussion of the καὶ γε recension in *Les devanciers d’Aquila* [VTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1963]).

²² Lit., “it is the third hour of the day.”

17 “‘It will happen in the last days,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions and your elderly will dream dreams.’²³ 18 Indeed, I will pour out my spirit upon my male slaves and my female slaves, and they will prophesy. 19 I will give wonders in heaven above and signs upon the earth below: blood and fire and clouds of smoke.²⁴ 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awe-inspiring²⁵ day of the Lord comes. 21 And everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Like the visionary appearance of Gabriel to both Zechariah and Mary, the Pentecost account is not an isolated story.²⁶ Instead, Peter interprets it in dramatic fashion.²⁷ In this case, however, the interpretation is much more explicit. Mary and Zechariah responded to their visionary experiences with canticles of praise—canticles comprising a pastiche of references to promises in Jewish Scripture. These songs do not cite a single biblical text, but allude to passages from many. In his response to the mockery of some in the crowd (Acts 2:13), on the other hand, Peter counters that the crowd is witnessing the fulfillment of a specific

²³ The terms *δρασις* and *ἐνύπνιον* occur only in this verse in Luke-Acts. The word *ἐνύπνιον* is a hapax in the NT; *δρασις* occurs only two other times in the NT (both in Rev). The term *δραμα* is generally preferred by Luke. There seems no reason, however, to join Haenchen in wondering whether Luke viewed the terms interchangeably: “When writing *δράσεις* and *ἐνύπνια* Luke *may have had in mind* such phenomena as in 9.10, 10.10, 11.5, 16.9, 22.17f., 27.23” (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 179 [emphasis mine]).

²⁴ It is interesting to note the possible allusion (in Joel and Acts) to the Sinai theophany (cf. the use of the relatively rare term *καπνός* in Exod 19:18).

²⁵ The adjective *ἐπιφανής* is used only here in the NT. It is more common in the LXX, where it is often used to translate the *niphal* participle of *רא* (as is the case in this passage from Joel). The Hebrew has the sense of “[causing] astonishment and awe” (BDB, s.v. “*רא*”). The Greek word, often translated “glorious” in biblical literature (BDAG, s.v. “*ἐπιφανής*”), more accurately bears a sense of sudden appearance or presence (LSJ, s.v. “*ἐπιφανής*”). I have chosen “awe-inspiring” because I think this translation more accurately reflects the nuance of the prophetic text.

²⁶ Two differences between this story and the infancy narrative, however, are noteworthy. Because Zechariah expresses doubt (Luke 1:18), Gabriel punishes him by rendering him mute (1:20). In Acts 2, on the other hand, it is not those experiencing the vision that doubt, but the secondary audience of people who witness the manifestation of the Spirit. Second, the interpretations of Mary and Zechariah comprise a collage of allusions to different OT texts. It is all the more interesting, therefore, that Peter’s interpretation is given as a quotation of a single prophetic text.

²⁷ Johnson suggests that Peter’s address to the crowd is best understood as a twist on the typology of Greek oracular pronouncements (e.g., from Delphi) that featured ecstatic speech and the interpretation of a *προφήτης*. For Johnson, Luke changes both of these features: the crowd is able to understand the speech, so Peter interprets not the speech, but the event itself (*Acts*, 53–54).

prophetic text:²⁸ LXX Joel 3:1–5a.²⁹ This direct quotation of Joel is all the more engaging because of two small, but significant, alterations to the quotation.³⁰ LXX Joel 3:1 begins καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ταῦτα (“and after these things it will be”). Peter, however, alters this beginning: καὶ ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (“it will happen in the last days”).³¹ With its emphasis on the “Day of the Lord,” the passage from Joel already has a strong eschatological emphasis (Acts 2:20, cf. LXX Joel 3:4). The alteration of μετὰ ταῦτα to ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις further underscores this emphasis and makes it even more explicit.³² Equally important is the addition of the possessive enclitic μου after δούλους and δούλας.³³ The text of Joel reads as follows: καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου (“upon both male

²⁸ Cf. Jesus’ interpretation in Luke 4:18–21.

²⁹ Because it parallels the MT, the versification of Rahlfs edition is used in the present study.

³⁰ Another minor variation that Peter makes in his citation of this prophetic text is the reversal of the original order of dreams and visions in Acts 2:17 (καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὁράσεις ὄψονται καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνυπνίους ἐνυπνιασθήσονται; cf. καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνύπνια ἐνυπνιασθήσονται καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὁράσεις ὄψονται [LXX Joel 3:1]). Although this variation is less significant than the other two discussed here, I would argue that Peter’s quotation foreshadows some of the visionary elements of Luke’s story. Although not a perfect lexical parallel, it seems no coincidence that Saul is explicitly described as young (νεανίας) in Acts 7:58. Not much time seems to elapse between this scene and Saul’s vision in Acts 9. Arguing that Paul is an older man “dreaming dreams” later in the narrative is a bit more sketchy, but it should be noted that Paul’s visions in the latter half of the narrative do occur at night (16:9–10; 18:9–11; 23:11; and 27:23–24). In any case, I would suggest that this explanation is more plausible than that of Spencer, who argues that this reversal is a subtle reflection of the greater overall emphasis on the visionary experiences of “younger men” in Luke-Acts (Acts, 36).

³¹ Haenchen argued for μετὰ ταῦτα as the original reading (*Acts of the Apostles*, 179), but Franz Mußner contended against this conclusion (“In den letzten Tagen [Apg 2:17a],” *BZ* 5 [1961]: 263–265).

³² Read in close connection with Acts 1:6, this textual manipulation in 2:17 may raise a tension between expectations of the characters in the narrative and the plan of God (cf. Jesus’ reply in Acts 1:7–8). Acts 2:17 may indeed create an eschatological expectation that will necessarily be reshaped in the course of the narrative. Certainly, there is no need to join James D.G. Dunn in the peculiar assumption that this passage indicates Luke’s unreflective use of his own sources: “In 2.17 the significant phrase is ‘in these last days’, which is *inserted* into the Joel prophecy. Since it is not Luke’s policy to emphasize the eschatological character of the epoch of the church, this insertion can hardly be his work and must derive from his source” (*Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 160). Such a strained interpretation deprives Luke of his ability to use character speeches as a way of introducing expectations that had to be reshaped by the ministries of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

³³ Acts 2:18; cf. LXX Joel 3:2.

and female slaves I will pour out my Spirit in those days” [LXX Joel 3:2]). By adding the possessive pronoun (“*my* male slaves and *my* female slaves”), Peter offers a powerful rejoinder to those that have scorned the believers as drunkards: the apostles are *not* “full of wine” (Acts 2:13); they *are* God’s own slaves.

This passage is as close to a reflective discussion of the significance of dream-visions as one finds in Luke-Acts,³⁴ and it is all the more important given the programmatic nature of Peter’s speech for Acts as a whole.³⁵ In the prophetic passage cited, visions and dreams are connected directly to prophecy. Peter perceives the Pentecost event as God pouring out God’s Spirit. This action empowers God’s slaves to experience visionary revelation and to prophesy, and it simultaneously signals the arrival of “the last days.” The slight alterations made to the quotation of Joel highlight the interpretive nature of Peter’s argument. Peter takes an eschatological passage in Scripture and imbues it with even more urgency—an urgency that resonates in Peter’s admonition to repentance in 2:37–40.³⁶ Just as the visions and interpreta-

³⁴ What is perhaps most surprising about Peter’s interpretation of the Pentecost event in light of LXX Joel 3:1–5a is the focus of the passage being quoted. These verses in Joel emphasize the pouring out of God’s Spirit, prophecy, and dreams and visions as they relate to prophecy. Only one, or perhaps two, of these emphases apply to the crowd’s reaction. The crowd wonders how it is that they hear, each in his or her own language, the believers speaking about the mighty acts of God (Acts 2:11–12). Thus, Peter’s quotation of this specific passage is understandable in that it addresses the filling of the Spirit and prophecy. More mysterious is why he would include the reference to visions and dreams since the crowd does not appear to have been present for the believers’ own vision. (It would seem odd that the narrator would mention the crowd’s surprise at hearing other languages spoken, but not mention a reaction to tongues of fire resting upon each of the speakers.) As the rest of Peter’s speech indicates, excerpting only specific portions of a given text is not problematic (see, for example, Donald H. Juel’s discussion of Peter’s speech as an example of midrashic exegesis (*Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 14 and passim). It seems likely, therefore, that this quotation addresses more than one audience. The portions of the quotation dealing with the pouring out of God’s Spirit and prophecy address the concerns of the immediate narrative audience, whereas the portions describing visions and dreams address the reading audience.

³⁵ As Gaventa observes: “Peter’s speech (2:14–40) occupies a pivotal place in Luke-Acts, because it interprets what has already happened in the death and resurrection of Jesus and because it offers essential clues for understanding what is about to unfold in Jerusalem and beyond” (*Acts*, 73). Focusing on the role of the Spirit, Hans Hübner asserts: “Just as Jesus proclaimed himself as Messiah in the Holy Spirit in a programmatic passage of the Gospel [Luke 4] ... the twelve in a programmatic passage now proclaim in the Holy Spirit the risen Messiah” (“The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture,” *ER* 41 [1989]: 238).

³⁶ So also Spencer, *Acts*, 35.

tions of the infancy narrative set the tone for Luke's Gospel, so Peter's interpretation of the Pentecost event has pervasive importance for Acts. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit and proclamation/prophesy permeates the plot of Acts as a story of God's people proclaiming what they perceive as God's plan.³⁷

An Angel Rescues the Apostles from Prison (Acts 5:19–21a)

19 Ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου διὰ νυκτὸς ἀνοίξας τὰς θύρας τῆς φυλακῆς ἐξαγαγὼν τε αὐτοὺς εἶπεν· 20 πορεύεσθε καὶ σταθέντες λαλεῖτε ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῷ λαῷ πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τῆς ζωῆς ταύτης. 21 ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἰσῆλθον ὑπὸ τὸν ὄρθρον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἐδίδασκον.

19 An angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison during the night and led them out, saying, 20 "Go, stand in the Temple and tell the people all the matters of this life." 21 After hearing this, they entered the Temple at dawn and began teaching.

Following the earlier discussion of Acts 1:10–12, it is interesting to note that this angelic appearance inspires no fear and engenders no doubt. The apostles are freed by the angel and enjoined to go to the Temple and teach the people "all the matters of this life." As in Acts 1:10–12, the apostles simply do what they are told. There is little indication of how the characters perceive the significance of the event, except that they regard the command of the angel to be a command of God (cf. 5:29).³⁸ This vision functions primarily to indicate that the power of God is superior to that of the human authorities.³⁹ The high priest

³⁷ See, for example, Acts 4:8, 31; 7:55–56; 9:17–19; 10:44–46; 13:9–11; 19:6; 21:4, 11. Hübner takes the significance of the Spirit in this passage one step further. Since part of the emphasis in Acts 2:38 is Peter's proclamation that his audience repent and be baptized so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, Hübner argues that "the Spirit does not only produce Christian preaching but also that *the church comes into existence through the Spirit*" ("Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture," 329).

³⁸ As Gaventa observes, this scene emphasizes a broader element of perception: "The repetition of the word 'temple' here underscores the conflict between the apostles and the authorities over who better perceives the will of the God of this same temple" (*Acts*, 106).

³⁹ So also Johnson, *Acts*, 102. Since this liberation is less elaborate than those found in Acts 12 and 16, Johnson suggests that the "strongest parallel" to Acts 5:19–21 is the prison break in Euripides' *Bacchae*; following the *Bacchantes* imprisonment (*Bacch.* 346–357), they are subsequently freed by Dionysius himself (*Bacch.* 615–640 [*Acts*, 97]). Haenchen argued: "It is the consensus of expert opinion that Luke has here adopted a tradition representing an inferior variant of the liberation episode in 12.3ff. This he reproduces in the baldest way, and from an author's viewpoint his instinct is right, for

places the apostles in prison, but they are quickly rescued by God's angel so that they can continue carrying out God's plan.⁴⁰ In the wake of the programmatic statement in Acts 2:17–21, the sole purpose of this visionary encounter is striking: they are freed so that they can continue to proclaim God's message.⁴¹

Stephen's Arrest and Recapitulation of Israel's Story (Acts 6:8 – 7:60)

Since Stephen's recapitulation of Israel's history emphasizes theophanic events, it is interesting that this passage is framed by two visionary moments.⁴² After Stephen is brought before the council on false charges (6:8–14), the council "looked (ἀτενίζω)⁴³ at him ... [and] saw his face as the face of an angel" (6:15).⁴⁴ Given the council's perception, it is all the

if he had depicted an angel's liberation of all the Apostles in as lively and colourful a manner as later that of Peter, he would have destroyed in advance the effect of Chapter 12" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 256).

⁴⁰ Cf. Acts 1:8. Jervell's observation is important: "Durch die Gemeinde geschieht der Wille Gottes mit Israel" (*Apostelgeschichte*, 206).

⁴¹ Note especially Luke's use ὅημα, found both at 5:20 and at the beginning of Peter's speech in Acts 2: ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ πάντες, τοῦτο ὑμῖν γνωστὸν ἔστω καὶ ἐνωτίσασθε τὰ ῥήματά μου ("Judeans and all who are visiting Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen carefully to my words" [2:14]).

⁴² There are so many references to dream-vision episodes within Stephen's retelling of Israel's history that it makes sense to treat the passage as a whole. It would be impractical to provide the text and translation of this entire passage. The pertinent portions of the text are noted in the discussion below.

⁴³ Of the ten uses of ἀτενίζω in Acts, eight (not including 6:15) occur in a context directly associated with a vision, a miracle, or the explicit filling of the Holy Spirit (see 1:10, 3:4, 3:12, 7:55, 10:4, 11:6, 13:9, and 14:9).

⁴⁴ This scene certainly bears some similarity to the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:29). If one were willing to stretch the criteria for dream-visions a bit, this passage might fit within the category. Instead, I regard Luke's repetition of the word "angel" (ἄγγελος) as being more significant for the parallel being drawn between the failure of Israel to keep the "law decreed by angels" (7:53) and the failure of Stephen's accusers to pay heed to his message, despite his altered appearance. Spencer would remind anyone mistaking such an image for "cherubic innocence" that "[a]ngels are dynamic, fearsome figures in Luke-Acts (and in the Bible generally), as demonstrated most recently in busting the apostles out of prison (5:19–21). As the high council could not control these angel-aided apostles, so now it cannot 'withstand' the angel-masked Stephen" (*Acts*, 69). Possible support for a more "cherubic" reading is found in the discussion of Johnson (*Acts*, 110). The phrase πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου occurs infrequently in the LXX, and usually it is a pleonastic expression for standing "in the presence" of an angel (e.g., Zech 3:1, 3). The use of this language in Judg 6 supports Spencer's reading: "Gideon saw that it was the angel of the Lord, and he said, 'Oh my Lord, oh my Lord, I saw the angel of the Lord face to face.' And the Lord said to him, 'Peace be with you. Do not be afraid; you will not die' (καὶ εἶδεν Γεδεων ὅτι ἄγγελος κυρίου οὕτως ἐστὶν καὶ

more striking that this story will end with their execution of Stephen. It will become clear only later in the narrative that this characterization of Stephen's face provides a dramatic parallelism: just as Stephen's narrative audience has not kept "the law decreed by angels" (7:53; cf. 7:38), so they also reject this messenger of God.⁴⁵

In his retelling of Israel's sacred history, Stephen emphasizes the theophanic appearances to Abraham and Moses. More than a quarter of the narrative of Stephen's speech is devoted to theophanic passages in Jewish Scripture.⁴⁶ Acts 7:2–8 summarize the theophanic appearances to Abraham in Gen 12–17, focusing in turn on the call of Abraham,⁴⁷ the promise of the land as a possession for Abraham's descendants,⁴⁸ and the covenant of circumcision.⁴⁹ After narrating some salient features of the Joseph story⁵⁰ and the rise of Moses, Stephen offers a detailed description of the theophany to Moses in the burning bush (Acts 7:30–34).⁵¹ Given this focus on theophanies, it is remarkable that Stephen keeps the visionary flavor of the giving of the Law at Sinai,

εἶπεν Γεδεων ἃ ἃ κύριέ μου κύριε ὅτι εἶδον ἄγγελον κυρίου πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ κύριος εἰρήνη σοι μὴ φοβοῦ οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃς [Judg 6:22–23]). The difficulty with Spencer's reading, of course, is that the council seems "immune" to Stephen's angel-like presence (Gaventa, *Acts*, 119).

⁴⁵ Stephen's vision and vision report in 7:55–56 provides the other end of this frame, and will be discussed below.

⁴⁶ That is, 15 of the 52 verses in Acts 7:2–53 are devoted to descriptions of theophanic encounters. The significance of this, of course, is that Stephen's recapitulation is a reflective selection of the salient features of Israel's history. That God's self-revelation is primary for Luke is indicated by the selection of these theophanic texts over others (Johnson, *Acts*, 121). Spencer puts this very provocatively: "A strong geographical interest related to the presence of God pervades this speech: Where has 'the God of glory appeared' (7.2)? Where does—and does *not*—'the Most High ... dwell'? (7.48). In responding to these questions, Stephen sketches an innovative map of divine space extending above and beyond the holy land of Israel" (*Acts*, 70). As Gaventa observes, God's "initiative is central to every point Stephen makes (*Acts*, 121).

⁴⁷ Cf. Gen 12:1–3.

⁴⁸ Cf. Gen 15:7–14.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gen 17:1–14.

⁵⁰ It is interesting to note that nothing is said of Joseph's role as a dream interpreter, despite the amount of narrative time devoted to Joseph (Acts 7:9–14).

⁵¹ Johnson suggests that Luke adds a "psychological reaction" here by describing Moses as "being amazed" (θαυμάζω), and "trembling" (ἐντρομος) in v. 32 (*Acts*, 128). Spencer notes the way in which the reference to this "fiery manifestation ... recalls the Pentecost spectacle earlier in Acts," and argues that this particular theophany adheres "with the implications of previous visionary experiences reported in Acts (Ascension, 1.8–11; Pentecost, 2.1–13)"; as with the burning bush theophany, these visions in Acts result in "missionary" activity (*Acts*, 75).

but does not relate the events as they are described in Exodus: “This [Moses] is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness with our ancestors and with the angel speaking to him on Mount Sinai, [Moses] who received living decrees to give to us” (Acts 7:38).⁵² This description preserves none of the cataclysmic drama of the Sinai theophany, but still retains a visionary source for the revelation of these “living decrees” (λόγια ζῶντα). In 7:44, Stephen mentions the instruction given to Moses in the theophany at Sinai related to the building of the “tent of witness.”⁵³ Stephen’s speech proper concludes in v. 53, where he again refers to “the Law decreed by angels”⁵⁴—the Law that his hearers have not kept.

The end of the frame around this retelling is found in the vision and vision report that precede Stephen’s murder. Just as the council “looked” (ἀτενίζω) at Stephen and saw a face like that of an angel in 6:15, now Stephen “looks” (ἀτενίζω) into heaven and sees “the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God’s right hand” (7:55).⁵⁵ This visionary

⁵² Spencer observes that reference to Stephen’s face appearing like an angel in 6:15, combined with the repeated references to an angel in Stephen’s discussion of Moses, creates a connection between these two figures (*Acts*, 77). Johnson unnecessarily attributes the mention of the angel in 7:35, 38, and 53 to the continuation of a motif beginning with the description of the burning bush theophany in 7:30 (*Acts*, 128). More helpful is his discussion of the ways in which the visionary aspect of the burning bush theophany came to be downplayed in some Hellenistic Jewish texts (*Acts*, 128). Johnson also notes the peculiar phrase “through the hand of the angel appearing to him in the bush,” comparing this to other “hand” imagery evoking gestures of power (Exod 4:2, 4, 7 [*Acts*, 129]). The phrase χεὶρ ἀγγέλου occurs infrequently in the OT and OTA, and always describes the agency of a human messenger (1Sam 11:7; 2Kgs 19:14, 23; Jer 34:3; Mal 1:1; 1Macc 1:44). It is used of an “angel” elsewhere only in Revelation (8:4; 10:8, 10). (The textual parallel in the marginal reference of NA²⁷, Deut 33:16, lacks the word ἄγγελος.)

⁵³ Cf. Exod 25:40.

⁵⁴ Johnson argues that the Hellenistic Jewish texts often used in support of this view—that the Torah was given by angelic intermediation (*Jub.* 1:29; Philo, *Dreams* 1.141–143; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136; *T. Dan* 6:2)—are debated (*Acts*, 134). The cited portions of *Jubilees* and Josephus are, nevertheless, compelling.

⁵⁵ P. Doble suggests that this is the first “vision” in Acts and connects this vision report with the “Son of Man” sayings in the Gospel, arguing: “Stephen’s vision is Luke’s testimony to the church that Jesus (as δίκαιος) had been vindicated and his Son of man oracles substantially fulfilled” (“The Son of Man Saying in Stephen’s Witnessing: Acts 6.8 – 8.2,” *NTS* 31 [1985]: 74–76). Tannehill observes a connection in the narrative between the emphasis on the theophanies to Abraham and Moses, and the report of Stephen’s own vision of the Lord (*Narrative Unity*, 2:97). Johnson notes the frequency with which visions accompany the death of a martyr in later Christian literature: *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 5:7; *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 10–13; *Martyrdom of*

encounter is unique in Acts because it is experienced by Stephen in the midst of others who do not see it,⁵⁶ and because it is reported to these others while it is still taking place: “Behold, I see⁵⁷ heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at God’s right hand” (7:56). This scene is also unusual in that it is one of only three dream-visions in Luke-Acts featuring a visual experience without an accompanying message.⁵⁸ This vision highlights a distinction between Stephen and his accusers. Although much of this discussion has focused on how the recipient of a vision perceives God’s will in the experience, this passage underscores instead the rejection of God’s will despite revelatory vision encounters both past and present.⁵⁹

Carpus, Pappylus, and Agathonica 39 (*Acts*, 139). As Spencer mentions, this vision indicates “a divine vindication of Stephen’s ministry and testimony” (*Acts*, 81; so also Day [“Function,” 142] and Jervell [*Apostelgeschichte*, 251]).

⁵⁶ Slightly similar visionary isolation is found in Saul’s experience on the way to Damascus (see Acts 9:7, and cf. the problematic retelling in 22:9). This episode will be discussed further below.

⁵⁷ Although Luke uses the verb *θεωρέω* in non-visionary contexts as well, it is prominent in several dream-vision scenes (e.g., Luke 10:18 and Acts 9:7).

⁵⁸ Building on the earlier work of Soards (*The Speeches of Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994], 32), Spencer notices that the act of standing “cues the beginning of an important speech” earlier in the narrative (Acts 1:15; 2:14). The reader might expect, therefore, “some vital words from Jesus to help Stephen through the immediate crisis” (*Acts*, 82). Although it seems significant that the Son of Man is “standing,” there has been no consensus in scholarship on exactly *how* it is significant; for a review of various opinions, see Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 392–393) and Day (“Function,” 143–145). The other “silent” visions are in Luke 10:18 (Jesus seeing “Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning”) and Luke 22:43–44 (the appearance of the angel who “strengthens” Jesus on the Mount of Olives).

⁵⁹ This reading, therefore, leads to slightly different conclusions than those often proposed regarding Stephen’s speech. T.C. Smith, for example, suggested that Stephen’s speech is designed to dismantle three advantages upon which Jews (including Jewish followers of Jesus) placed special emphasis: first, the inheritance of the land as a result of the promise to Abraham; second, God’s self-revelation in the Torah through Moses; and third, the sacrosanct nature of the Temple (“The Significance of the Stephen Episode in Acts,” *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1975 [2 vols.; *SBLSP* 12; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1975], 2:21). More recently, Todd Penner has challenged such arguments—arguments based solely on source-critical and historical-critical criteria—by examining the Stephen episode in light of the prescriptions of epideictic rhetoric (“Narrative as Persuasion: Epideictic Rhetoric and Scribal Amplification in the Stephen Episode in Acts,” *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1996 [*SBLSP* 35; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1996], 352–367). My own conclusions are complementary to this approach, underscoring Luke’s emphasis on the way that God’s self-revelation has been ignored by God’s people.

*Dream-Visions and the Spread of the Gospel**An Angel, the Spirit, Philip, and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–40)*

26 Ἄγγελος δὲ κυρίου ἐλάλησεν πρὸς Φίλιππον λέγων· ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύου κατὰ μεσημβρίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν καταβαίνουσαν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Γάζαν, αὕτη ἐστὶν ἔρημος. 27 καὶ ἀναστὰς ἐπορεύθη. καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος δυνάστης Κανδάκης βασιλείσης Αἰθιοπῶν, ὃς ἦν ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς, ὃς ἐληλύθει προσκυνήσων εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ, 28 ἦν τε ὑποστρέφων καὶ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἅρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεγίνωσκεν τὸν προφήτην Ἡσαΐαν. 29 εἶπεν δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τῷ Φιλίππῳ· πρόσελθε καὶ κολλήθητι τῷ ἅρματι τούτῳ. 30 προσδραμὼν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος Ἡσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην καὶ εἶπεν· ἄρα γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις; 31 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἔάν μὴ τις ὀδηγήσει με; παρεκάλεισέν τε τὸν Φίλιππον ἀναβάντα καθίσαι σὺν αὐτῷ. 32 ἡ δὲ περιοχὴ τῆς γραφῆς ἣν ἀνεγίνωσκεν ἦν αὕτη· ὥς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγὴν ἤχθη καὶ ὥς ἄμνος ἐναντίον τοῦ κείραντος αὐτὸν ἄφωνος, οὕτως οὐκ ἀνοίγει τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ. 33 Ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει [αὐτοῦ] ἡ κτίσις αὐτοῦ ἤρθη· τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγῆσεται; ὅτι αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ. 34 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ εὐνοῦχος τῷ Φιλίππῳ εἶπεν· δέομαί σου, περὶ τίνος ὁ προφήτης λέγει τοῦτο; περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἢ περὶ ἑτέρου τινός; 35 ἀνοίξας δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ταύτης εὐηγγελίσαστο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν. 36 ὥς δὲ ἐπορεύοντο κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν, ἤλθον ἐπὶ τι ὕδωρ, καὶ φησιν ὁ εὐνοῦχος· ἰδοὺ ὕδωρ, τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι; 37⁶⁰ 38 καὶ ἐκέλευσεν στήναι τὸ ἅρμα καὶ κατέβησαν ἀμφοτέροι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, ὃ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ εὐνοῦχος, καὶ ἐβάπτισεν αὐτόν. 39 ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβησαν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος, πνεῦμα κυρίου ἦρπασεν τὸν Φίλιππον καὶ οὐκ εἶδεν αὐτόν οὐκέτι ὁ εὐνοῦχος, ἐπορεύετο γὰρ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ χαίρων. 40 Φίλιππος δὲ εὐρέθη εἰς Ἀζωτον· καὶ διερχόμενος εὐηγγελίζετο τὰς πόλεις πάσας ἕως τοῦ ἐλθεῖν αὐτόν εἰς Καισάρειαν.

26 An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go south⁶¹ on the road going down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is in the wilderness. 27 He arose and went. And behold, there was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, an official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, the overseer

⁶⁰ In a few manuscripts, one finds a confessional addition to the text at this point. A number of variants exist among the witnesses including this material. The version in Codex E will serve the purpose here: εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Φίλιππος· ἐάν πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου σωθήσῃ. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν· πιστεύω εἰς τὸν χριστόν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (“Philip said to him, ‘if you believe with your whole heart, you will be saved. Answering, he said, ‘I believe in the Christ, the Son of God’”). Cottrell Carson’s attempt to demonstrate that this verse could be original is unconvincing (“Acts 8:37—A Textual Reexamination,” *USQR* 51 [1997]: 57–78).

⁶¹ It is also possible to translate κατὰ μεσημβρίαν as “about noon” (BDAG, s.v. “μεσημβρία”). Such a translation emphasizes God’s intervention in the event, as no one would be likely to make such a trip at midday (Gaventa, *Acts*, 141).

of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem in order to worship. 28 He was returning, sitting on a chariot and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. 29 The Spirit said to Philip, “approach and join this carriage. 30 Running up to it, Philip heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you have any idea what you are reading?” 31 The other said, “How can I unless someone guides me?” He invited Philip, who had gotten up on the carriage, to sit with him. 32 The passage of the text he was reading was this: “As a sheep led to slaughter and as a lamb before the one shearing it is silent, so he does not open his mouth. 33 In [his] humiliation, his justice was taken away. Who will describe his generation, since his life is taken from the earth?” 34 Answering, the eunuch said to Philip, “I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this? About himself, or about someone else?” 35 Opening his mouth and beginning with this passage, Philip proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came upon some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?” 37⁶² 38 He commanded the carriage be stopped and both of them went down into the water; both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched up Philip and the eunuch saw him no more, for he began to go on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus, and he went through all the cities proclaiming the good news until he came to Caesarea.

Of all the dream-vision episodes in Luke-Acts, the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch exhibits the least concern for human interpretation of God’s will.⁶³ The nuanced relationship between visionary experiences and character perception so prominent in other episodes is completely absent here. An angel tells Philip “arise and go” (ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύου). In response, Philip “arose and went” (ἀναστὰς ἐπορεύθη). Far from showing fear or questioning the angelic message, Philip exhibits no reaction at all except to do exactly as the angel has instructed—an automatic response that is highlighted by the repetition of ἀνίστημι and πορεύομαι.⁶⁴ This rather flat and unreflective beginning continues

⁶² For a translation of the spurious text of v. 37, see n. 60 above.

⁶³ Haenchen provides a discussion of older scholarship (Harnack, Bauernfeind, Meyer, Lake, etc.) focusing on the psychological interpretation of this visionary episode (*Acts of the Apostles*, 313–314). To deal with the historical problems raised by the divine activity in this scene, these scholars appealed to the possibility that Philip himself was the source of the story, and he was a mantic who walked around in an ecstatic state. It would not be surprising, therefore, for him to describe the event in these terms. Haenchen noted that such interpretations miss the point of the divine activity in this story: the eunuch’s conversion is first and foremost part of the divine plan (*Acts of the Apostles*, 315).

⁶⁴ Philip’s automatic response hardly warrants Abraham Smith’s enthusiastic evaluation, in which he depicts a contrast between “ready Philip” and “reluctant Peter”:

in v. 29, as the Spirit tells Philip to “approach and join” the eunuch’s carriage.⁶⁵ Again, Philip obediently runs to the carriage,⁶⁶ but what happens next seems rather surprising.⁶⁷

Translations invariably render Philip’s question in neutral language: “Do you understand what you are reading?” (8:30).⁶⁸ The interrogative particle ἄρα, however, expects a negative answer. As such, it is popular in rhetorical questions.⁶⁹ The inclusion of the particle γέ strengthens the negative assumption being made.⁷⁰ Indeed, ἄρα γε is found only three times in the LXX and NT combined. The other two occurrences are both in Genesis (18:13 and 37:10).⁷¹ In the first, one of the three “travelers” of the Gen 18 theophany questions Abraham about Sarah’s incredulity: τί ὅτι ἐγέλασεν Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα ἄρα γε ἀληθῶς τέξομαι ἐγὼ δὲ γεγήρακα (“Why is it that Sarah laughed, saying to

“the latter is only able to share good news with someone from a foreign land after a series of visions, special divine interpretation, and not a little time to think the matter over. Thus, Philip’s ready willingness to take the gospel to someone from outside Israel bespeaks both his submissiveness to the deity and his desire to extend the power of the deity. Peter’s reluctance bespeaks his initial misunderstanding, but his eventual submission intimates the ultimate power of the deity to prevail over all” (“Do You Understand What You Are Reading?: A Literary Critical Reading of the Ethiopian [Kushite] Episode [Acts 8:26–40],” *JITC* 22 [1994]:63). Smith’s reading paradoxically attributes greater psychological motivation to Philip than does the narrator of Acts, and at the same time suggests that character interpretation of visionary experience means nothing since God “prevails over all.”

⁶⁵ As noted earlier, it is common to find intermingling of different divine agents in OT theophanies (see also the discussion of the shepherds’ vision above [p. 148 n. 100], and Newsom’s comments quoted in the introduction [pp. 13–14]). There is less overlap between the angel and the Spirit in Acts 8 than there will be in the Cornelius–Peter episode, but the story of Philip and the eunuch hints at such intermingling nonetheless.

⁶⁶ Drawing on passages like 1 Kgs 18:46 and Jer 23:21, Rick Strelan suggests that Luke’s presentation of Philip running (προσδραμών) is a conscious attempt to connect this character with the depictions of prophets in the OT (“The Running Prophet [Acts 8:30],” *NovT* 43 [2001]: 31–38).

⁶⁷ Although it would be difficult to argue that it is the original reading, P⁵⁰ has προσέλθων instead of προσδραμών in 8:30. This variant reading parallels the verbal repetition of ἀνίστημι and πορεύομαι in 8:26–27.

⁶⁸ The question is translated precisely this way by the NRSV, NASV, and NIV. This modern rendering resembles the neutrality of the older KJV: “Understandest thou what thou readest?”

⁶⁹ Gal 2:17 is an example cited by BDAG (s.v. “ἄρα”): εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιοθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο (“if, seeking to be justified in Christ, we are found also to be sinners, is Christ a servant of sin? Absolutely not!”).

⁷⁰ LSJ, s.v. “ἄρα”; BDAG, s.v. “ἄρα.”

⁷¹ It is intriguing that all three occur in visionary contexts.

herself, ‘Oh sure, will I really bear a child now that I have grown old?’). The second marks one of the few cross statements made by Jacob to his favorite son, Joseph: καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ τί τὸ ἐνύπνιον τοῦτο ὃ ἐνυπνιάσθης ἄρα γε ἐλθόντες ἐλευσόμεθα ἐγώ τε καὶ ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου προσκυνῆσαι σοι ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν (‘His father scolded him and said, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Do you really think I, your mother, and your brothers will come to bow down to the ground before you?’’). Although it is difficult to render the exact meaning of ἄρα γε in translation, it is far from neutral. A more accurate translation of Philip’s question is: ‘Do you have any idea what you are reading?’⁷² One could even suggest a more acerbic alternative: ‘You have no idea what you are reading, do you?’⁷³

Given this tone, the eunuch’s response is all the more odd. The syntax of his reply, ‘How can I unless someone guides me,’ has elicited some interesting comments from scholars.⁷⁴ Although the optative is rather rare in the NT, more interesting is the choice of the verb ὁδηγέω. This term is used with some frequency in the LXX, and almost always has the sense of being ‘guided’ by *God*.⁷⁵ The divine intervention pervading this episode elicited the following from Haenchen: ‘Notice how exceptionally high an incidence of divine intervenings and directives is needed, what extra-special providence must do its work, for the accomplishment of this one conversion and baptism.’⁷⁶ Beyond the directives of both the angel and the Spirit, Haenchen adds the coincidence of Philip’s approach at just the moment when Isa 53:7–8 are being read. Such interventions lead Haenchen to link this story with the Cornelius–Peter episode.⁷⁷ To these observations, I would add that

⁷² Fitzmyer’s translation is close to this: ‘Do you really understand what you are reading?’ (*Acts*, 413); he does not discuss the syntax of the question, however. Jervell, too, gets at the flavor of the original with ‘Verstehst du auch, was du liest?’ (*Apostelgeschichte*, 268).

⁷³ In any case, the question is hardly ‘polite,’ as Johnson suggests (*Acts*, 158).

⁷⁴ Haenchen, for example, suggested: ‘Luke’s educated readers must have relished the potential optative with ἄν—the Greeks had an ear for such things’ (*Acts of the Apostles*, 316).

⁷⁵ It occurs 40 times in the LXX (Exod 13:17; 15:13; 32:34; Num 24:8; Deut 1:33; Josh 24:3; 2 Sam 7:23; 1 Chron 17:21; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps. 5:9; 22:3; 24:5, 9; 26:11; 30:4; 42:3; 44:5; 59:11; 60:4; 66:5; 72:24; 76:21; 77:14, 53, 72; 79:2; 85:11; 89:16; 105:9; 106:7, 30; 107:11; 118:35; 138:10, 24; 142:10; Eccl 2:3; Job 31:18; Isa 63:14). Only six of these refer to a guide other than God (LXX Ps. 44:5, 59:11 [and the parallel 107:11], 77:72; Eccl 2:3; Job 31:18).

⁷⁶ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 314–315.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 315.

even Philip's question and the eunuch's response—the insulting query of a random passerby and the positive reception of this query by a foreign dignitary—help to underscore the overwhelming divine intervention in this scene that culminates with the Spirit whisking Philip away to Azotus.⁷⁸ This may facilitate a better understanding of the passage as a whole, a passage in which even non-visionary elements point to divine guidance.⁷⁹ Standing in contrast to so many of the other dream-vision stories in Luke-Acts, this passage does appear to be characterized by the obviation of human theological discernment.⁸⁰ It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that this story is followed by an account that marks the most dramatic character interpretation in Acts: Saul's vision on the road to Damascus.

*Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1–19, 22:6–21, and 26:12–18)*⁸¹

With the original narration of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 and the subsequent retellings of this event in chapters 22 and 26,⁸² the reader encounters a different sort of interpretation than that found, for example, in

⁷⁸ A number of commentators have noted the probable connections to visionary stories about Elijah from 1 Kgs 18:12 and 2 Kgs 2:16 (see, for example, Johnson [*Acts*, 158] and Tannehill [*Narrative Unity*, 2:108]). It is interesting to note, however, that neither of these texts describes such an action taking place. In both cases, characters in the narrative are concerned that the "Spirit of the Lord" *could* remove Elijah to another geographical location so that he might not be found. Another scriptural "example" of such activity is Ezek 11:24 (e.g., Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 415); at least in the LXX, however, Ezekiel appears to depart *based on* his vision, *after* it is over.

⁷⁹ See the discussion of Haenchen's comments in n. 63 above.

⁸⁰ Johnson observes: "The dramatic interventions of the angel and the Spirit serve to highlight Luke's fundamentally religious perspective on the story: the mission is not first of all a result of human enterprise but of the Spirit's impulse" (*Acts*, 160). This is true. One of the arguments of the present study, however, is that God's "enterprise" and human discernment are often in concert in Luke-Acts. This makes the scene in Acts 8:26–40 all the more intriguing.

⁸¹ On regarding this as a "conversion," as opposed to a more limited sense of "calling," see Gaventa, *Acts*, 155. See also Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁸² The differences between the three accounts of Saul's call/conversion in Acts 9, 22, and 26 have been assessed in remarkably different ways in the history of scholarship. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars solved the problem of these differences by arguing for the use of different source material: F. Spitta (*Die Apostelgeschichte, ihre Quellen und deren geschichtlichen Wert* [Halle, 1891]), H. Wendt (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen, 1913]), and E. Hirsh ("Die drei Berichte der Apostelgeschichte, über die Bekehrung des Paulus," *ZNW* 28 [1929]: 305–312), are the classic examples (see Haenchen's summary [*Acts of the Apostles*, 325–327]). More recently, scholars have

the Magnificat and Benedictus. In those canticles, Mary and Zechariah interpret their respective visions with little or no verbatim retelling of the visions themselves.⁸³ In their experience, they perceive God fulfilling promises described in Jewish Scripture. For the most part, their songs of praise focus on this fulfillment rather than on the specifics of their respective visions. The story of Saul's conversion differs in that the character's subsequent experience dramatically affects his recollection of the original event, as demonstrated by the variations between the original narration of the event and the character's own filtered accounts later in the story.⁸⁴ Whereas Mary and Zechariah interpret their vision-

abandoned source hypotheses in favor of examining Luke's narrative as a coherent whole. (See, for example, Gaventa, "The Overthrown Enemy: Luke's Portrait of Paul" [in *SBLSP* 1985; ed. Kent Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 439-449; idem, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 52-95; Ronald Witherup, "Functional Redundancy in the Acts of the Apostles: A Case Study," *JSN* 48 [1992]: 67-86; William Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], 125-131; and Daniel Marguerat, "Saul's Conversion [Acts 9, 22, 26] and the Multiplication of Narrative in Acts," in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* [JSNTSup 116; ed. C.M. Tuckett; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 127-155.)

⁸³ This comparison to the stories of Mary and Zechariah raises the related question of characterization. Witherup has argued that "the redundancy seen in Acts 9, 22 and 26 is part of the purposeful characterization of Paul growing in stature as a witness to the gospel to the ends of the earth. These three passages are the main pillars in the characterization of Paul as a witness to the gospel. With each passage the stature of Paul increases, as if controlled by a literary rheostat or switch, as the role of Ananias and Paul's companions decreases" (70). Although I share Witherup's interest in the characterization of Paul in these passages, I would suggest that he has overstated the case. The fact that Paul's filtered accounts of the Damascus road experience focus more on himself than other characters is in keeping with the way in which filtered accounts highlight the perspective of the filtering character in other ancient texts (note, for example, the helpful study of Irene de Jong discussed above in the introduction [p. 18]). To regard these passages as the "main pillars" of Luke's characterization of Paul is also debatable. Rather than describing Paul's increase in "stature," I would argue that these passages should be read in light of other character-filtered accounts in Luke-Acts. When viewed from this angle, the emphasis falls upon Paul's interpretation of God's plan and God's will in light of his visionary and missionary experiences. Furthermore, I would suggest that this reading adheres more fully to Luke's dual-emphasis on God's action and the interpretation of this action by human characters. Paul's understanding of his visionary encounter in light of his subsequent experience is more pertinent to Luke's purpose than "allow[ing] the reader to watch Paul change from a persecutor, to a blind and helpless convert, to an eloquent spokesperson for the faith" ("Functional Redundancy," 84).

⁸⁴ In a careful, narrative-critical reading of the three accounts of Saul's conversion that builds upon the "repetition equals emphasis" model of Haenchen (*Acts of the Apostles*, 327) and studies demonstrating the rhetorical appropriateness of the variations given the fact that Paul is defending himself in Acts 22 and 26, Marguerat argues

ary experience as God fulfilling God's promises, Paul appears to interpret his vision based on his subsequent experiences as an apostle.⁸⁵ It

that Luke's multiplication of narrative in these passages serves a definite theological purpose: "The question of how each narrative functions within the plot of the book of Acts is also a matter of great importance. Acts 9 points up ecclesial mediation; Acts 22 focuses on Saul's Jewishness; Acts 26 points out how the evangelization of the Gentiles is legitimated" (154). Although I do not necessarily disagree with this conclusion, I am unsure whether demonstrating "ecclesial mediation" is the main theological purpose of the account in Acts 9. Furthermore, I would question the usefulness of drawing such a strong distinction between Acts 22 and 26 in terms both of Saul's Jewishness and in terms of the legitimation of the Gentile mission; both elements are present in both retellings. The most important point of contact with the present study is Marguerat's attention to the shifting point of view from Acts 9 to 22 and 26: "As far as its informative value within the narrative is concerned, Acts 9 *towers above* Acts 22 and Acts 26. The three accounts do not work together according to the principle of a 'coinciding of narrative points of view' (citing Witherup, "Functional Redundancy," 74 n. 19), but according to the principle of differentiation of points of view, since the narrative apparatus distinguishes the objective and earlier point of view of the omniscient narrator (Acts 9) from the subjective and later point of view of the speaker Paul in Acts 22 and 26" (137 [emphasis mine]). The extent to which Acts 9 "towers above" 22 and 26 in "informative value" depends upon how one reads this story. Although I would not disagree with the prevailing narrative-critical assessment that a reliable narrator's point of view "overrides" that of a character within the narrative (Marguerat, 137 n. 28, citing Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 156; cf. also Kurz's discussion of the Acts 9 version as "authoritative" [*Reading Luke-Acts*, 126]), I would argue that the narrator's account (Acts 9) and the character-filtered accounts (22 and 26) are interwoven in the narrative with a very distinct result. If one wants to assess the way in which characters perceive God's will in light of visionary experiences in Luke's story, the narrator's version simply provides the necessary background against which one reads Paul's own interpretation of the event. My primary disagreement with Marguerat, therefore, is a matter of emphasis. For Marguerat, the primacy of the narrator's version has very definite implications for the interpretation of the story: "The supremacy of the narrator's account (Acts 9) over the retrospective speeches of Paul must be theologically assessed: only after the divine intervention has overturned the life of Saul the Pharisee does a personal rereading of the event become possible (Acts 22 and 26); in other words, the narrative supremacy of the narrator serves here as a literary mediation for the theological precedence of God's intervention in history over the subjective appropriations of the same event" ("Saul's Conversion," 138). There can be no question that God's action serves as the precedent for Paul's work and later recollections. What I wish to point out is that Luke is just as interested—or perhaps even more interested—in depicting Paul's *interpretation* of that precedent as he is in depicting the precedent itself. If one wants evidence of this, one may quickly measure the narrative time devoted to the retellings in contrast to that devoted to the original narration.

⁸⁵ Kurz concurs with this idea, but suggests that Paul's filtration creates "limitations": "Focalization through Paul puts *limits* on what is narrated. Due to Saul's preoccupation with his own overwhelming experience . . ." (*Reading Luke-Acts*, 129). I would disagree. Rather than creating limitations, the use of varying perspectives—that of the narrator and that of a character filter—allows Luke to *increase* what can be told in the

is this later interpretation that permits the reader a glimpse of Paul's perception of God's will as it relates to his vision.⁸⁶

Jesus Confronts Saul (Acts 9:3–7)

3 Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐγγίξιν τῇ Δαμασκῷ, ἑξαίφνης τε αὐτὸν περιήστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 4 καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἤκουσεν φωνὴν λέγουσαν αὐτῷ· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις; 5 εἶπεν δέ· τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δέ· ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις· 6 ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λαληθήσεται σοι ὃ τί σε δεῖ ποιεῖν. 7 οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες οἱ συνοδεύοντες αὐτῷ εἰστήκεισαν ἑνεοί, ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς μηδὲνα δὲ θεωροῦντες.

3 At a point in his journey when he was nearing Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 After falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 Saul said, "Who are you, sir?"⁸⁷ The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But get up and go into the city; you will be told what you must do." 7 The men traveling with him stood speechless, because they heard the voice, but saw no one.

The only visual element described in this vision is the light that "shines around" Saul.⁸⁸ The emphasis, instead, is on Jesus' message and Saul's reaction. Since indications of fear, as well as corresponding words of reassurance, have been strangely absent in the earlier vision scenes in Acts, it is interesting to see the reversal of this pattern here. There is no explicit statement of "fear," but fear can certainly be inferred

narrative. Luke's use of original narration and character filtration allows him to emphasize both God's role in the event *and* Paul's attempt to perceive the will of God based on this experience.

⁸⁶ Variations in character speeches in Greek literature date back to Homer. See the discussion of de Jong's study above (introduction, p. 18).

⁸⁷ On κύριε as a form of respectful address in this period, see LSJ, 1013; cf. also Acts 16:30, which indicates Luke's own familiarity with this use of κύριος. Fitzmyer argues for this reading and notes others who have as well (*Acts*, 425). In the context of a question asking "Who are you," translating the word as "Lord"—referring to God—makes little or no sense (*contra* Johnson, *Acts*, 163).

⁸⁸ Found also in the description of Apollonius' visionary encounter in 4Macc 4:10, the verb περιήστραπτω occurs only in the story (and retelling) of Saul's conversion in the NT (Acts 9:3; 22:6). This vision involving Jesus certainly creates a contrast between Saul's experience and the vision of Stephen reported in Acts 7:55–56. Spencer presses the connection: "Whereas Stephen 'saw' the splendor of Jesus's glory at God's right hand before being struck by a barrage of rocky blows, Saul 'could see nothing' after being struck by a bolt of celestial lightning" (*Acts*, 96).

from Saul's reaction (πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ["falling to the ground"]).⁸⁹ Jesus, however, makes no effort to assuage any of the fear that Saul may feel. Instead, Saul is literally blinded by this encounter with the Lord.

The voice questions Saul: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Such name repetition is found in OT theophanies like Gen 46:2 and Exod 3:4.⁹⁰ Indeed, Saul's only immediate response to his vision (εἶπεν δὲ τίς εἶ, κύριε; ["[Saul] said, 'who are you, sir?'"]) is probably based on the similar reply offered identically by both Jacob and Moses (ὁ δὲ εἶπεν τί ἐστίν; ["and he said, 'what is it?'"]). As with the echo of Abram's question on the lips of Zechariah ("how will I know this? [Luke 1:18, cf. Gen 15:8]), this allusive play on words emphasizes the distinction being drawn between Saul's encounter and those of Jacob and Moses. Neither Jacob nor Moses feels the need to question the source of his vision. Saul, however, cannot assume the source. In his zealous persecution of Jesus' followers, he has had no sense of persecuting God. Jesus' reply ends the dialogue abruptly. Saul is ordered to enter the city, and told that he will be instructed about what he must do. The command to arise and go resembles the angel's/Spirit's commands to Philip in Acts 8. In the narrative time of that story, however, Philip quickly finds the reason for his journey. Saul, on the other hand, is told that he will be given instructions later. Oddly, such instructions are not given formally in Luke's narrative. Indeed, the reader will have to piece these "instructions" together—largely by inference—for the remainder of the story. This vision is rather unique, therefore, in its inclusion of an element of narrative suspense.⁹¹ Adding to the drama of the passage is the final description of the lasting effect of this encounter on Saul: "Saul was lifted from the ground. Despite his eyes being open, he saw nothing. They led him by hand into Damascus. He was not able to see for three days; he neither ate nor drank" (9:8–9).

⁸⁹ This response is underscored by the explicit statement in v. 7 that Saul's fellow travelers "had stood speechless, because they heard the voice but saw no one."

⁹⁰ The marginal notes in NA²⁷ also indicate 1 Sam 3:4. (NA²⁷ mistakenly cites Exod 2:4 instead of 3:4.) As Fitzmyer observes: "The Lucan account of Saul's call has often been compared with the call of prophets in the OT (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:19b–22; Isa 6:1–10; Jer 1:4–10), but it is important too to note a difference. In the OT the call stories are recounted as a commission for a special mission, but not as a call to change one's way of life, which is the burden of the call of Saul" (*Acts*, 421).

⁹¹ Two other visions in Acts share this aspect of suspense. The first is Peter's quotation of Joel in Acts 2:17–18. The second is the original narration of Peter's vision and his response to it (Acts 10:10–17).

Saul's story is interrupted in v. 10 by the narration of Ananias' vision (9:10–18). Although this is the first such occurrence in Luke-Acts, double dream-visions were not uncommon in ancient literature.⁹² Good examples of this device interweave the experiences of the two vision recipients, and Luke demonstrates the technique well.

The Lord Speaks to Ananias (Acts 9:10–18)

10 Ἦν δέ τις μαθητὴς ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὀνόματι Ἀνανίας, καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν ὁράματι ὁ κύριος· Ἀνανία. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἰδοὺ ἐγώ, κύριε. 11 ὁ δὲ κύριος πρὸς αὐτόν· ἀναστὰς πορεύθητι ἐπὶ τὴν ὁῦμν τὴν καλουμένην Εὐθείαν καὶ ζήτησον ἐν οἰκίᾳ Ἰούδα Σαῦλον ὀνόματι Ταρσέα· ἰδοὺ γὰρ προσεύχεται 12 καὶ εἶδεν ἄνδρα [ἐν ὁράματι]⁹³ Ἀνανίαν ὀνόματι εἰσελθόντα καὶ ἐπιθέντα αὐτῷ [τάς] χεῖρας ὅπως ἀναβλέψῃ. 13 ἀπεκρίθη δὲ Ἀνανίας· κύριε, ἤκουσα ἀπὸ πολλῶν περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τούτου ὅσα κακὰ τοῖς ἁγίοις σου ἐποίησεν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ· 14 καὶ ὧδε ἔχει ἐξουσίαν παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων δησαι πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους τὸ ὄνομά σου. 15 εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν ὁ κύριος· πορεύου, ὅτι σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων υἱῶν τε Ἰσραὴλ· 16 ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑποδείξω αὐτῷ ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου παθεῖν. 17 Ἀπῆλθεν δὲ Ἀνανίας καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν καὶ ἐπιθεὶς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας εἶπεν· Σαοὺλ ἀδελφέ, ὁ κύριος ἀπέσταλκέν με, Ἰησοῦς ὁ ὀφθεῖς σοι ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἣ ἦρχου, ὅπως ἀναβλέψῃς καὶ πλησθῇς πνεύματος ἁγίου. 18 καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπέπεσαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὡς λεπίδες, ἀνέβλεψέν τε καὶ ἀναστὰς ἐβαπτίσθη 19 καὶ λαβὼν τροφὴν ἐνίσχυσεν.

10 There was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He replied, "Here I am, Lord." 11 The Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called 'Straight' and ask for Saul of Tarsus in the house of Judas; behold, he is praying 12 and saw [in a vision] a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he might regain his sight. 13 Ananias answered, "Lord, I heard about this man from many people, and about the many terrible things he did to your holy ones in Jerusalem. 14 Here he has authority

⁹² See especially Wikenhauser, "Doppelträume," 100–111. As we will see, Luke will employ double visions three times in Acts 9–12. "Double dream-visions" are the occurrence of related visions to two different individuals (see, for example, the related visions of Alexander the Great and the High Priest Jaddus in Josephus, *Ant.* 11). One could also consider the visions in the infancy narrative as an instance of double dream-vision, since they both feature the angel, Gabriel, and since the messages themselves hint at a relationship between the future ministries of John and Jesus.

⁹³ The phrase ἐν ὁράματι is not in P⁷⁴ or Codex $\mathfrak{X}$. It does occur, however, in other ancient witnesses like Codex B. I have kept it in brackets both in the text and translation. Whether or not this phrase is included, the text describes a vision seen by Paul while praying.

from the high priests to bind up all who call upon your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this one is my instrument, chosen to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel. 16 For I myself will show him how much it is necessary for him to suffer for my name’s sake.” 17 Ananias went out, entered the house, laid hands upon him, and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were traveling—in order that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales. He regained his sight, got up, and was baptized. 19 After taking some food, he became stronger.

The vision to Ananias has a flavor similar to some of the theophanies in Genesis. Ananias’ initial reply echoes the words of Abraham in Gen 22:11 (ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐγώ, κύριε).⁹⁴ Although not responding doubtfully, *per se*, Ananias does question the Lord’s direction (Acts 9:13–14; cf. Gen 15:2, 8; 18:17–32), and his resistance adds an interesting facet to the question of the relationship between visions and the perception of God’s will.⁹⁵ This story features a contrast between Ananias’ perception of Saul and the Lord’s purpose for this same figure. Based on the reports of others, Ananias perceives Saul as a dangerous persecutor (9:13). The Lord counters instead that Saul is a “chosen instrument” (9:15). Ananias perceives the arrest of believers as Saul’s purpose (9:14). The Lord’s purpose, instead, is that Saul should “bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel” (9:15).⁹⁶ What is so interesting about this scene is that Ananias’ reaction does not bring punishment from the Lord, as Zechariah’s does from Gabriel (Luke 1:20). The Lord does counter each of Ananias’ objections, but also responds to some of Ananias’ concerns. Verse 16, therefore, sounds a retributive note: “I myself will show him how much it is necessary for him to suffer for my name’s sake.”

This vision scene also features a second, embedded vision report, in which Saul is described as seeing a vision while he prays (9:12). One of the dramatic features of Luke’s narrative description of Saul’s conversion is the way that Saul is reduced from one who is actively engaged

⁹⁴ Only κύριε is lacking in the Genesis passage.

⁹⁵ As Tannehill argues: “Ananias must be persuaded to do his job... . Human disbelief highlights the amazing transformation of Saul worked by the Lord... . The disciples are not prepared to obey the Lord because they are afraid of their persecutor... . The Lord’s work is revealed through events that overthrow human expectations” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:116–117).

⁹⁶ Haenchen demonstrated this point well, concluding, “Thus the words of Christ exactly counter those of Ananias” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 325).

in persecuting believers (9:1–2) to one who is completely passive, being led by the hand and abstaining from food and drink (9:8–9). It is all the more interesting, therefore, to note the one action Saul performs between verses 5 and 18: he is actively engaged in prayer to God.⁹⁷ Only in the context of this active engagement with God is Saul able to “see” in spite of his blindness. Indeed, vv. 11–12 assert a remarkable paradox: “he is praying, and saw (ὁράω) ... a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he might regain his sight (ἀναβλέπω).” Perhaps it would not be too great a stretch to suggest that Saul is seeking God’s will in this prayerful activity.

After initially questioning the Lord in v. 13, Ananias responds obediently in v. 17. His address to Saul, however, contains a number of variations from the preceding verses. There is no mention of the Lord appearing to Saul on the road to Damascus in Ananias’ vision (9:17; cf. 9:10–16). It does mention Ananias laying hands on Saul so that he might regain his sight (9:12; cf. 9:17), but includes nothing about this action also bringing about the filling of the Holy Spirit. This variation is even more interesting since there is no further mention of the Holy Spirit in the passage. Given Saul’s subsequent action—proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues—the reader is invited to assume that this filling of the Spirit has taken place. However, this is not explicit and remains a “gap” in the narrative.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 428.

⁹⁸ See, for example, the discussion of narrative gaps in Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), 235–237 and passim. It is important, however, not to presume a gap where one does not necessarily exist. Although he does not use this term, Tannehill makes such a presumption: “Paul will bear witness to what he has seen and heard, that is, to his encounters with the exalted Messiah. This task presupposes that Paul saw the Messiah, not just the light... . The summary of Barnabas’ account emphasizes two things: the encounter on the road, which included seeing the Lord and being addressed by him, and Saul’s bold preaching in Damascus... . Note that Barnabas says that Saul ‘saw the Lord’ (9:27). This clarifies a point in the previous narrative. In 9:3–6 it is not clear whether Saul saw Jesus or only the brilliant light... . That Paul has seen the Lord will enable him to be a witness of Jesus Messiah, as the apostles have been” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:120 and 123–124). There is no reason why Paul’s task “presupposes that Paul saw the Messiah, not just the light.” Aside from the light itself, the original narration does not specify any other visual aspect of this dream-vision. Visual elements are added in later, character-filtered accounts of the episode. Barnabas does tell the believers in Jerusalem that Saul “saw the Lord,” but this is his own filtered version of events. Saul’s *encounter* with the risen Lord is enough for the narrator. Tannehill’s presupposition in this case amounts to a detracting from Paul’s *interpretation* of his experience.

Paul's First Retelling (Acts 22:6–21)

6 Ἐγένετο δέ μοι πορευομένῳ καὶ ἐγγίζοντι τῇ Δαμασκῷ περὶ μεσημβρίαν ἑξαίφνης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιαστράψαι φῶς ἰκανὸν περὶ ἐμέ, 7 ἔπεσά τε εἰς τὸ ἔδαφος καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις; 8 ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπεκρίθην· τίς εἶ, κύριε; εἶπέν τε πρὸς με· ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος, ὃν σὺ διώκεις. 9 οἱ δὲ σὺν ἐμοὶ ὄντες τὸ μὲν φῶς ἐθεάσαντο τὴν δὲ φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν τοῦ λαλοῦντός μοι. 10 εἶπον δέ· τί ποιήσω, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν πρὸς με· ἀναστὰς πορεύου εἰς Δαμασκὸν καὶ κεῖ σοι λαληθήσεται περὶ πάντων ὧν τέτακται σοι ποιῆσαι. 11 ὥς δὲ οὐκ ἐνέβλεπον ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τοῦ φωτὸς ἐκείνου, χειραγωγούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν συνόντων μοι ἦλθον εἰς Δαμασκόν. 12 Ἀνανίας δὲ τις, ἀνὴρ εὐλαβὴς κατὰ τὸν νόμον, μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν κατοικούντων Ἰουδαίων, 13 ἐλθὼν πρὸς με καὶ ἐπιστάς εἶπέν μοι· Σαοὺλ ἀδελφέ, ἀνάβλεψον. καὶ γὰρ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἀνέβλεψα εἰς αὐτόν. 14 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν προεχειριστάτο σε γνῶναι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰδεῖν τὸν δίκαιον καὶ ἀκοῦσαι φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, 15 ὅτι ἔση μάρτυς αὐτῷ πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὧν ἑώρακας καὶ ἤκουσας. 16 καὶ νῦν τί μέλλεις; ἀναστὰς βάπτισαι καὶ ἀπόλousαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. 17 Ἐγένετο δέ μοι ὑποστρέψαντι εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ προσερχομένου μου ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ γενέσθαι με ἐν ἐκστάσει 18 καὶ ἰδεῖν αὐτὸν λέγοντά μοι· σπεῦσον καὶ ἔξελθε ἐν τάχει ἐξ Ἱερουσαλὴμ, διότι οὐ παραδέξονται σου μαρτυρίαν περὶ ἐμοῦ. 19 καὶ γὰρ εἶπον· κύριε, αὐτοὶ ἐπίστανται ὅτι ἐγὼ ἤμην φυλακίζων καὶ δέρων κατὰ τὰς συναγωγὰς τοὺς πιστεύοντας ἐπὶ σέ, 20 καὶ ὅτε ἐξεχύνντο τὸ αἷμα Στεφάνου τοῦ μάρτυρός σου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤμην ἐφρεστὼς καὶ συνενδοκῶν καὶ φυλάσσων τὰ ἱμάτια τῶν ἀναιρούντων αὐτόν. 21 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με· πορεύου, ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν ἐξαποστελῶ σε.

6 Around noon, as I was traveling and nearing Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 8 I answered, “Who are you, sir?” He said to me, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.” 9 The ones with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one speaking to me. 10 I said, “What shall I do, Lord?”⁹⁹ The Lord said to me, “Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about all the things that have been assigned to you to do.” 11 Since I was unable to see from the radiance of that light, the ones traveling with me led me by the hand and I came into Damascus. 12 A certain Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, spoken well of by all the Jews living there, 13 came and stood near me. He said to me, “Brother Saul, regain your sight!” In that very hour, I was able to see him. 14 He said, “The God of our ancestors handpicked you to

⁹⁹ I have translated κύριος as “Lord” here because Paul now understands this as a reference to Jesus (see the reference to the “Righteous One” in 22:14). See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 149.

know his will, and to see his Righteous One and hear the voice from his mouth, 15 for you will be a witness for him to all people of the things that you have seen and heard. 16 So now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and cleansed of your sins, after calling upon his name.” 17 And it happened to me when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the Temple, in a trance 18 I saw him¹⁰⁰ saying to me, “Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony concerning me.” 19 And I said, “Lord, they know that I went from synagogue to synagogue imprisoning and beating the ones believing in you. 20 When the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was present, approving and watching the cloaks of the ones killing him.” 21 He said to me, “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”

The beginning of Paul’s first retelling follows the original narrative rather closely.¹⁰¹ After only a few minor variations, the first real discrepancy is found in 22:9,¹⁰² in which Paul interrupts the story to describe the experience of his fellow travelers. This interruption is even more striking because it contains a contradiction of the original narration. In 9:7, the narrator informs us that “the men traveling with him ... heard the voice, but saw no one.” Instead of maintaining this story, Paul declares: “the ones with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one speaking” (22:9). The problem with this contradiction will become more apparent in the discussion of v. 11 below.

Paul comes across more boldly in his own account than in the original. In the narrator’s description of the conversion, Paul utters nothing after “Who are you, sir?” (9:5). In his own telling of the story, Paul inserts a statement which suggests his willingness to comply with the voice: “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10).¹⁰³ In a similar vein, Paul continues to embellish the account in v. 10. In the original story, Jesus tells Paul to go into the city where he will be told “what [he] must do”

¹⁰⁰ The pronoun is ambiguous. The most reasonable antecedent would be Ἰησοῦς or κύριος (see 22:8, 10).

¹⁰¹ As Marguerat has observed: “The dialogue between Jesus and Saul is characterized by word-for-word repetition... . An *invariable kernel*, preserved from one narrative to the next, thus crystallizes upon the identification dialogue that succeeds the shock of encounter” (“Saul’s Conversion,” 134–135).

¹⁰² The time of the vision, “about mid-day,” has been added. This is not, however, a significant point in determining the reliability of the vision. Fitzmyer seems to imply such a distinction: “‘About noontime’ makes it clear that Paul’s vision was not a dream of the night” (*Acts*, 705). Luke does not make such a distinction about reliability (cf. the “night” dream-visions in Acts 16:9; 18:9–11; and 27:23–24). More important is the contrast now established between the light of the sun at mid-day and the noticeably brighter light from heaven that shines around Paul during the vision.

¹⁰³ Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 72.

(9:6). In Paul's version, Jesus tells him to go into Damascus where he will be told "about all the things that have been assigned to [him] to do" (22:10).¹⁰⁴

In v. 11, the "light" discrepancy creates a problematic variation. Paul states: "Since I was unable to see from the radiance of that light, the ones traveling with me led me by the hand and I came into Damascus." This goes beyond contradicting the original narration. Indeed, this facet of Paul's story makes no sense whatsoever. If Paul was blinded *by* the light, and his fellow travelers saw the *same* light, how could they possibly have been in any better shape to find their way to Damascus?¹⁰⁵ Whatever other significance one might attribute to this irreconcilable inconsistency, it certainly marks this retelling as the character's own filtered version of the experience.

Paul's rather free interpretation of events continues in his description of Ananias. In 9:10, Ananias is described merely as "a certain disciple."

¹⁰⁴ The verb "assign" (τάσσω) is used in Acts to refer to both significant and somewhat insignificant matters. In 13:48, it is used of those who have been "assigned" to eternal life. In 28:23, it is used of setting up a date for Paul's discussion with the Jews of Rome.

¹⁰⁵ Commentators often attempt to gloss over this discrepancy. Many note the variation from chapter 9 and then explain that the contradiction does not amount to much within the overall scope of what Luke is doing in this passage (see, for example, the summary discussion in Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:321). They focus instead on the fact that the version in chapter 22 brings in witnesses who are important because this is a trial-like scenario. Roy Harrisville attempts resolution in the following way: "The finite verb [εἰσπήκασαν] used in 9:7 suggests that Paul's companions rose to their feet after hearing the sound. In the same verse, it is not stated that none saw a light, but that the men with Paul heard the voice the voice but saw 'no one'" ("Acts 22:6–21," *Int* 42 [1988]:181). Witherup suggests that more important than the discrepancy is the way that the changing light imagery facilitates Luke's "transforming portrayal of Paul": "In the first case [Paul's] companions are privy to part of the revelation, hearing the voice. In the second case they are reduced to seeing the light, which is explained by the addition of three details which emphasize the brightness of the light: that it happened 'about noon' (v. 6), the brightest time of the day; and that it was a 'great light' (φῶς ἰκανόν, v. 6; cf. 9:3); and that the blindness was caused by the brightness (v. 11). In the third case the role of the companions is reduced even further. They fall to the ground in the face of a 'light from heaven, brighter than the sun' (v. 13), but then they disappear from the story line altogether" ("Functional Redundancy," 79). Marguerat suggests the following: "Having been forewarned about the difference among the enunciators, the reader *will not be surprised* when the successive reports of the Damascus road event present divergences among themselves" ("Saul's Conversion," 137 [emphasis mine]). This suggestion founders on the simple fact that so many readers *have been surprised* by these divergences. None of these attempts is very satisfying. Barrett summarizes some similarly dissatisfying attempts to reconcile this question by asserting different meanings for ἀκούω when it takes a genitive (Acts 9:7) versus the accusative (22:9 [Acts, 1038–1039]).

In 22:12, Ananias is transformed into a “devout man according to the Law, spoken well of by all the Jews living [in Damascus].” If Ananias was a follower of “the Way,” it seems unlikely that all the Jews in Damascus would have thought so highly of him.¹⁰⁶ Because Paul is defending himself against a Jewish mob, however, it makes sense that he would want to paint a pious picture of the one who authenticates the divine origin of Saul’s visionary experience.¹⁰⁷ In 9:17, Ananias says, “Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were traveling—in order that you regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Paul’s character-filtered version in Acts 22 contains a significant addition, placing on Ananias’ lips a call statement: “The God of our ancestors handpicked you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One and hear the voice from his mouth, for you will be a witness for him to all people of the things that you have seen and heard” (22:14–15).¹⁰⁸ In the original narration, Saul learns only that he will be told what is necessary for him to do (9:6), and that the Lord has sent Ananias in order that he might regain sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17). Paul alters the account in this

¹⁰⁶ But cf. Fitzmyer (*Acts*, 706) and Barrett (*Acts*, 441).

¹⁰⁷ As Gaventa observes, Paul’s retelling of his experience “contains nothing that would offend Paul’s Jewish audience” (“The Overthrown Enemy,” 446; see also Marguerat, “Saul’s Conversion,” 148). As noted previously, earlier scholarship often treated such variations as an indication that Luke was using different sources for Acts 9, 22, and 26. This solution is unnecessary, however, as Gaventa observes: “What we find in Acts 22 is not a different source or a corrected source. It is the same story that appeared in Acts 9, but altered in such a way as to make the points Luke needs to make here” (*From Darkness to Light*, 76). (See also Gaventa’s discussion of the narrative cohesion of Acts 9, over against earlier claims that this passage represents the collation of various sources [“The Overthrown Enemy,” 439–445].) Her argument is compelling. Certainly the variations we have noted all point to an attempt to make Paul’s conversion experience more palatable to his (narrative) audience—in this case a hostile audience of Jewish accusers (*From Darkness to Light*, 74). Tannehill summarizes the need for these adaptations as follows: “The Jerusalem Jews can accept Paul only if they understand the change that took place in him and the force behind that change. So Paul tells his story ... in a way that encourages his hearers to recognize this as the work of ‘the God of our Fathers’” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:276).

¹⁰⁸ In 9:15–16, the Lord tells Ananias: “[Paul] is my instrument, chosen to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel. For I myself will show him how much it is necessary for him to suffer for my name’s sake.” Paul’s rendition of events is, therefore, not only completely different from what Ananias says in 9:17, but also differs dramatically from the original narration of what the Lord says about Paul’s election in 9:15–16. Given the focus of this study, it is important not to overlook that the perception of God’s will becomes explicit in Paul’s first filtered account of his call—“The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will” (22:14).

filtered version of the event. Nowhere does he mention the filling of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹ More significant, he embellishes his vision in light of his subsequent experience: he reflects back onto his initial conversion the call to witness that has dominated his subsequent actions in the narrative.

Paul's most dramatic departure from the original narration of events occurs in 22:17–18. Here, Paul describes an ecstatic vision he had while praying in the Temple: "I saw him saying to me, 'Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony concerning me.'" This divine warning to leave the city is remarkably different from the narrated version in 9:29–30.¹¹⁰ In the original narration, "the brethren" hear of a plot to kill Paul, so they escort him to Caesarea and send him off to Tarsus. Here, Paul attributes this act of human deliverance to the Lord.¹¹¹ After reporting his brief protest in 22:19–20,

¹⁰⁹ This omission is particularly interesting given the focus on the Spirit in the evangelistic context of Acts 2:17.

¹¹⁰ Some attempts to reconcile the lack of this information in the original narration have detracted from what may be its most important function in the narrative context. Both Johnson and Tannehill view Paul's Temple vision as something that would normally belong with the original story in chapter 9. For Johnson, the addition of the Temple vision in 22 serves as an "amplification of the role played by the Risen Lord" (*Acts*, 394). Tannehill goes so far as to argue: "The narrator did not tell us of Paul's temple vision in Acts 9, where it chronologically belongs. This is an example of what Gerard Genette calls an 'anachrony,' a variation by the narrator from the presupposed order of events" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:283 [summarizing Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 35–36]). Both of these explanations seem to imply that the vision must have occurred to save the narrator from unreliability. Such a solution, however, is not necessary. The narrator's reliability need not be called into question just because information coming through a character filter does not agree precisely with what precedes in the narrator's own version of events. (Indeed, Tannehill himself notes that one primary reason for the alterations of the story in chapter 22 is due to a shift in point of view, from the narrator to Paul [*Narrative Unity*, 2:275]). The addition of the vision here in vv. 17–21 need not be viewed as an example of "anachrony." The original narration was quite clear. The Jerusalem believers got Paul out of Jerusalem to save his life. In describing this incident in terms of a heavenly vision, Paul is merely attributing this act of deliverance to God. By presenting the story in this way, Paul is focusing both on God's act of deliverance and on God's role as the initiator of his mission to the Gentiles. Closer to, but not synonymous with, this view is the treatment of Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt: "The disclosure of the vision [Acts 22:17–21] is a narrative leap backward to an indeterminate occasion when Paul made a visit to Jerusalem... . The effect is to dramatize, accelerate, and intensify the narrative by focusing on a spiritual experience of short duration, Paul's conversation with Jesus. The conversation is brief, and its narration has verisimilitude with an actual encounter" ("Recurrent Narration as a Lukan Literary Convention in Acts: Paul's Jerusalem Speech in Acts 22:1–21," in *New Views on Luke and Acts* [ed. Earl Richard; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990], 100).

¹¹¹ As Johnson observes, however, "[t]his is not the time to stress Paul's past con-

Paul then claims that the Lord told him, “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles” (22:21).¹¹² In Paul’s filtered version of events, the “God of our ancestors” has thus not only called him to be a witness, but has even initiated his mission to the Gentiles, and has done so in the Temple.¹¹³

Paul’s Second Retelling (Acts 26:12–20)

12 Ἐν οἷς πορευόμενος εἰς τὴν Δαμασκὸν μετ’ ἐξουσίας καὶ ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς τῶν ἀρχιερέων 13 ἡμέρας μέσης κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν εἶδον, βασιλεῦ, οὐρανόθεν ὑπὲρ τὴν λαμπρότητα τοῦ ἡλίου περιλάμψαν με φῶς καὶ τοὺς σὺν ἐμοὶ πορευομένους. 14 πάντων τε καταπεσόντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἤκουσα φωνὴν λέγουσαν πρὸς με τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις; σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν. 15 ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα· τίς εἰ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν· ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις. 16 ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ στήθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου· εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὤφθην σοι, προχειρίσασθαί σε ὑπηρετήν καὶ μαρτυρὰ ὧν τε εἶδές [με] ὧν τε ὀφθήσομαί σοι, 17 ἔξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔθνων εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε 18 ἀνοίξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτόους εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἁφесιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πιστεῖ τῇ εἰς ἐμέ. 19 Ὅθεν, βασιλεῦ Ἀγρίππα, οὐκ ἐγενόμην ἀπειθής τῇ οὐρανίῳ ὀπτασίᾳ 20 ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἐν Δαμασκῷ πρῶτόν τε καὶ Ἱεροσολύμοις, πᾶσάν τε τὴν χώραν τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπήγγελλον μετανοεῖν καὶ ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἅξια τῆς μετανοίας ἔργα πράσσοντας.

12 In this capacity, I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the high priests. 13 At midday, O King, I saw along the road a light, brighter than the sun, shining around me and the ones traveling with me. 14 After we all fell to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” 15 I said, “Who are you,

flicts with” other Jews (*Acts*, 394). Instead, as George A. Kennedy has observed, it is important here for Paul to note that God bears the responsibility for his mission to the Gentiles: “Since Paul does not deny that his actions have been inconsistent with the law, the stasis is best regarded as metastasis, transferring responsibility for his actions to God” (*New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984], 134; in classical rhetoric, the *stasis* was the “basic issue of the case” [18]).

¹¹² Cf. *Acts* 9:15.

¹¹³ On the Temple as a locus of special revelation, see the discussion of Gnuse in chapter 4 above (p. 114 n. 7). Haenchen notes, “By this feature Luke wants to show that in the Temple, God’s holy place of revelation to which he remains loyal, Paul the devout Jew experiences the appearance of Jesus” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 627). I would agree, with the slight modification that Luke is here showing Paul reimagining his experience to include a revelation in this special place.

sir?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose: to handpick you as a servant and witness of the ways in which you have seen me, and of the ways in which I will appear to you.¹¹⁴ 17 I am delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, in order that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a portion among those sanctified by faith in me." 19 After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but first in Damascus and Jerusalem, and then in the whole region of Judea and among Gentiles, I called upon people to repent, and to turn to God, doing deeds worthy of repentance.

If Paul's retelling of his conversion in chapter 22 is a liberal rendering of the original, the retelling in chapter 26 represents an even greater interpretive departure. Following a few syntactic embellishments in vv. 12–13, the first important difference is found in the addition of the enigmatic phrase: "it is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14).¹¹⁵ The last recognizable phrase from the original narration is "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (26:15). What follows builds on the embellishments of Paul's first retelling. In 22:14, Paul says he was told by Ananias that the "God of our ancestors" had "handpicked" (προχειρίζομαι) him to be a "witness" (μάρτυς) of "all that he had seen and heard." In 26:16, it is the Lord himself who tells Paul that he has "handpicked" (προχειρίζομαι) him to be both a "servant" (ὑπηρέτης) and "witness" (μάρτυς) of "the ways in which [he] has seen [the Lord] and of the ways in which [the Lord] will appear to [him]." In both accounts, Paul's interpretive recollection ascribes the initiation of the Gentile mission to visionary revelations from the Lord (22:21 and 26:17). In chapter 26, however, the Lord commissions Paul in the first appearance on the road to Damascus, and imbues this mission with its explicit purpose: "to open their eyes, in order that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a portion among those sanctified by faith in me" (26:18).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ On the textual problems with the verse and the resulting difficulties for translation, see Johnson, *Acts*, 436. The accusative object, με, does not occur in some of the best witnesses (e.g., P⁷⁴, **8**); I have included it here because it is the more difficult reading and offers the same difficulty as the first-person verb ὁφθῆσομαι later in the verse.

¹¹⁵ For a brief discussion of the use of this phrase in antiquity, see Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 83.

¹¹⁶ Fitzmyer regards this speech and the reactions to it as the "christological climax"

The way that Paul filters this second retelling reflects the broader development of his role in the narrative.¹¹⁷ The author causes the reader to linger over this development by allowing the character who experienced the events of Acts 9 to interpret (Acts 22) and reinterpret them (Acts 26). Paul now sees the futility of his struggle against those following Jesus: “it is hard for you to kick against the goads” (26:14).¹¹⁸ Similarly, Paul now describes his call in light of his experiences proclaiming the message of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles.¹¹⁹ As Tannehill notes, Paul’s conversion has been reshaped in light of the role that Paul has fulfilled as a “prophetic messenger.” It is no surprise, therefore, that the language of this passage resembles prophetic literature (Ezek 2:1–3; Jer 1:7–8; and Isa 42:6–7).¹²⁰

Many of the variations in the two retellings of Paul’s conversion can be understood in light of different narrative audiences. The double repetition of Paul’s conversion, however, can benefit only the implied reader—and they benefit the reader in a very specific way: by serving to highlight Paul’s own understanding of his conversion. Johnson’s comments about Luke’s use of repetition are helpful:

By now we have learned that the lessons Luke wants learned well he repeats... [This is] the case in the two retellings of Paul’s conversion. The fact *that* he retells them tells the reader how important this experience of Paul is... The *way* he retells them shows us the lesson we are

of Acts, “for Luke makes Paul formulate the role of faith in the suffering Messiah” (*Acts*, 755). See also Robert F. O’Toole, *Acts 26: The Christological Climax of Paul’s Defense* (*Ac. 22:1–26, 32*) (AnBib 78; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

¹¹⁷ As Gaventa has observed: “Vv. 16–18 stand both as a recollection of Paul’s conversion and as a part of his defense at a much later period. For this reason, Jesus can say that Paul will witness to things he has already seen (v. 16), referring not simply to the conversion but to other visions Paul experiences. Similarly, v. 17 suggests that Paul is being delivered from ‘the people and the Gentiles.’ At his conversion, such deliverance was unneeded, but it is needed at the time Paul addresses Agrippa and Festus” (“The Overthrown Enemy,” 448). Johnson offers the following: “more significant than the incidental details distinguishing this version from the others ... is the evidence in this retelling of Paul’s growing awareness of the meaning of the event” (*Acts*, 441). Barrett’s assertion—“Either Luke is deliberately introducing variation, so as to achieve the emphasis that comes from repetition and at the same time avoid the risk of losing his reader, or he is using different traditions” (*Acts*, 1159)—is far too reductionistic.

¹¹⁸ See also Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 83; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:320; and Johnson, *Acts*, 441.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 84.

¹²⁰ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:322–323.

to derive from the experience. Luke isolates and elaborates those parts of the story that he wants the reader to see again more closely.¹²¹

What is “isolated and elaborated” in the retellings of Acts 22 and 26 is Paul’s interpretation of his initial vision in light of his subsequent experience. The development of Paul’s understanding is underscored by the fact that the final retelling in Acts 26 is almost unrecognizable in relation to the original visions of Acts 9. This story has changed from one in which Paul is rebuked and rendered powerless to one in which he has been empowered and protected as God’s witness.¹²² The importance of this event for the Lukan narrative is demonstrated by the narrative time devoted Paul’s conversion/call, both in terms of the original narration and in terms of Paul’s own retellings that result “in the Damascus experience acquiring a longer run on the stage of Acts than other events.”¹²³

The Visions of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:1 – 11:18)

Like the sequence of visions to Saul and Ananias in Acts 9, what follows in Acts 10–11 is an interwoven, interrelated, double dream-vision. This episode begins with the appearance of an “angel of God” to the God-fearing Gentile Cornelius and ends with Jewish believers in Jerusalem declaring: “So God has given the repentance to life to the Gentiles as well” (11:18). In between, the reader finds a great deal of interpretation as the characters struggle to come to terms with the inclusion of Gentiles in The Way. Also like the story of Saul’s conversion, this segment of Acts features a significant amount of repetition, with characters filtering their dream-vision encounters in reports to other characters.¹²⁴ Variations between the original narration of these events and the character-filtered accounts provide the reader insight into these characters’ perception of God’s will in light of their visionary experiences.

¹²¹ Johnson, *Acts*, 393.

¹²² Noting the shifting use of “light” imagery, Marguerat makes this point nicely: “No longer is Saul crushed down by the light: in Acts 26, he is rather rereading this numinous encounter as a prophetic call to become himself a light, that is, a bearer of salvation beyond Israel” (“Saul’s Conversion,” 152).

¹²³ Rosenblatt, “Recurrent Narration,” 105.

¹²⁴ Tannehill notes the interest in this passage of structuralist critics like Barthes and Funk (*Narrative Unity*, 2:130). I am interested in the way these character-filtered accounts reflect character perception of God’s will—most importantly with regard to the visions in the story, but also with regard to subsequent events. Here, I would concur with Johnson: “The extended descriptions of visions, hesitations, visitations, and narrations,

An Angel of God Appears to Cornelius (Acts 10:1–6)

1 Ἄνθρωπος δὲ τις ἐν Καισαρείᾳ ὀνόματι Κορνήλιος, ἑκατοντάρχης ἐκ σπείρης τῆς καλουμένης Ἰταλικῆς, 2 εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν σὺν παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, ποιῶν ἐλεημοσύνας πολλὰς τῷ λαῷ καὶ δεόμενος τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ παντός, 3 εἶδεν ἐν ὁράματι¹²⁵ φανερώς ὥσπερ περὶ ὥραν ἐνάτην¹²⁶ τῆς ἡμέρας ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθόντα πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ εἰπόντα αὐτῷ· Κορνήλιε. 4 ὁ δὲ ἀτενίσας αὐτῷ καὶ ἔμφοβος γενόμενος εἶπεν· τί ἐστίν, κύριε; εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· αἱ προσευχαί σου καὶ αἱ ἐλεημοσύναι σου ἀνέβησαν εἰς μνημόσυνον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ. 5 καὶ νῦν πέμψον ἄνδρας εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ μετὰπεμψα Σίμωνά τινα ὃς ἐπικαλεῖται Πέτρος· 6 οὗτος ξενίζεται παρὰ τινι Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ,¹²⁷ ὃς ἐστὶν οἰκία παρὰ θάλασσαν.

1 A certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of the so-called Italian cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God along with his whole household and gave many alms to the people and beseeched God continually, 3 saw clearly in a vision at around three o'clock in the afternoon¹²⁸ an angel from God approaching him and saying, “Cornelius.” 4 Gazing at him and becoming afraid, he said, “What is it, Lord?”¹²⁹ He said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial

all serve to unfold the rich significance of this new and final extension of God's people. Each retelling ... tells something more, *as though the characters themselves grew to understand better what they were up to* as they spoke to each other about it” (*Acts*, 187 [emphasis mine]).

¹²⁵ It is no surprise that Luke uses his preferred term ὄραμα in the Cornelius–Peter story. Witherup observes the significance of the prepositional phrase ἐν ὁράματι: “It is interesting to note that with both Cornelius and Ananias the dative expression ἐν ὁράματι is used ... emphasizing the instrumental nature of the phenomenon. In both cases it is a way of emphasizing God's initiative and the person's instrumentality” (“Cornelius Over and Over and Over Again: ‘Functional Redundancy’ in the Acts of the Apostles,” *JST* 49 [1993]: 54).

¹²⁶ Haenchen argues: “the mention of the ninth hour ... shows not merely Cornelius' piety but at the same time (like φανερώς) the reality of the occurrence; it takes place in broad daylight” (*Acts of the Apostles*, 346). This somehow suggests that a vision occurring at night would be less reliable. There is absolutely no indication that Luke makes such distinctions in the reliability of dream-visions (cf. Acts 16:9; 18:9–11; 27:23–24).

¹²⁷ Spencer suggests that Peter's lodging with a “tanner” may bear a great deal of significance. Since the occupation of tanning was often disparaged as “unclean” in some Rabbinic sources (*m. B. Bat.* 2.9; *m. Shabb.* 1.2; *m. Meg.* 3.2), Spencer argues that Peter's willingness to stay with a tanner may indicate that he is already moving in a direction of accepting those whom others might call unclean: “One possible reading imagines more of a complex developmental *process* in Peter's socio-religious orientation, pushing certain radical boundaries here while toeing the party line there” (*Acts*, 113).

¹²⁸ Lit., “the ninth hour.”

¹²⁹ Fitzmyer suggests that κύριε should be translated “sir” here, as in 9:5. I would disagree on the basis of the different visionary contexts.

before God. 5 Now, send men to Joppa and summon a certain Simon, who is called Peter. 6 This man is visiting another Simon, a tanner, whose house is near the sea.

As with the vision to Zechariah in Luke 1, this scene begins with a rather detailed description of Cornelius, highlighting his worthiness as a worshiper of God.¹³⁰ For the first time in Acts, the narrator explicitly ascribes fear to the vision recipient. It would appear to be no coincidence that this reaction is ascribed to the first Gentile to see a vision in the narrative.¹³¹ Cornelius' fearful reaction is underscored by the lack of any attempt on the part of the angel to assuage his fear.¹³² Further echoing the story of Zechariah, the angel tells Cornelius that his "prayers and alms" have "ascended to become a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4; cf. Luke 1:13). Without any further fear, doubt, or confusion, Cornelius responds obediently, sending for Peter.¹³³

The reader is given little information about Cornelius' understanding of his own experience, aside from his obedient dispatch of servants to Joppa.¹³⁴ What little there is can be found in Cornelius' retelling of

¹³⁰ Cf. Luke 1:5–7.

¹³¹ Haenchen observes that "[i]n the presence of heavenly messengers, mortals feel terror" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 346). This ignores the fact that a number of "mortals" have seen "heavenly messengers" in Luke's narrative without expressing any fear.

¹³² See the discussion of fear and assuagement as a part of various form-critical studies of visions and theophanies in chapter 4 (pp. 114–115).

¹³³ Despite the remarkable differences between Cornelius' and Peter's reactions, Haenchen comments here that "both Peter and Cornelius act in blind obedience to God, the sole governor of all action," prefiguring his now infamous declamation about the Lukan theology in this passage (*Acts of the Apostles*, 347; see also the discussion of Haenchen's criticisms in the introduction and chapter 2).

¹³⁴ Fixating on the location of Joppa, some scholars have attempted to draw a parallel between the Cornelius–Peter episode and the Jonah story (see Spencer, *Acts*, 112–113). I would argue, on the contrary, that such a parallel is extremely unlikely. Since both stories focus on theophanic elements, I would like to engage one of the most extensive arguments on this topic. Robert W. Wall argues that such a parallel is "clear," basing his conclusions on what he regards as "parallel and sequential catchwords" found in the two stories ("Peter, 'Son' of Jonah: The Conversion of Cornelius in the Context of Canon," *JST* 29 [1987]: 80). Wall's argument is far from convincing. Following C.S.C. Williams, he notices that Peter's Aramaic name is "Simon bar Jonah" (79). The primary problem with adducing this appellation as evidence is that it is cited in Matthew, but never in Luke–Acts. The "parallel and sequential catchwords" are similarly far-fetched. First, Wall observes the presence of "Joppa" in both accounts (80). Although "Joppa" is mentioned in both stories, the activity of Peter (raising Tabitha from the dead) is hardly similar to that of Jonah (trying to get away from God). Second, Wall notes the hesitancy of both Peter and Jonah (80), despite the fact that Peter's "hesitance" (μηδαμῶς ῥύσῃ) is a direct allusion to Ezek 4:14 and recalls the context there, whereas μηδαμῶς is uttered instead by the *sailors* in the Jonah story

the event in 10:25–33. This episode includes both proleptic and analeptic references to other “vision” stories in the narrative. Foreshadowing the Lystrans’ worship of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14, Cornelius falls at Peter’s feet and begins to worship him (10:25). This attempted worship is all the more striking given Cornelius’ description of the “angel” (10:3) as “a man in shining garments” (10:30). This character-filtered account reverses the pattern found in Luke 24:4. In the Gospel, the narrator describes the two figures who appear to the women as “men” (ἄνδρες). It is the characters who understand this experience to be a “vision of angels” (ὄπτασίαν ἀγγέλων) in Luke 24:23. The opposite has occurred in Acts 10. Although the narrative itself establishes Cornelius as a worthy figure, Cornelius’ subsequent action of worshipping Peter calls his perception into question. Based on the evidence in the narrative, it is difficult to garner more about Cornelius than his status as a devout God-fearer¹³⁵ who obediently follows the angel’s instructions.¹³⁶ His unreflective response stands in contrast to the more elaborate interpretive actions of Peter that follow.

(Jonah 1:14). Third, Wall observes the presence of the phrase “arise and go” (ἀνίστημι and πορεύομαι) in both Jonah 3:2 and Acts 10:20. This small piece of evidence would be far more convincing if this expression were not used so frequently by Luke (see Luke 1:39; 15:18; 17:19; Acts 8:26, 27; 9:11; [10:20]; 22:10). Fourth, Wall mentions that the Gentiles in both contexts “believed” (80). In doing so, he notes, but glosses over a significant difference: the author of Jonah uses the verb ἐμπιστεύω, a verb never employed by Luke; Luke does use the similar πιστεύω in this story (10:43), as well as in over forty other verses in Luke-Acts. Fifth, Wall observes that the Gentile conversion meets with a hostile response in both stories (Jonah 4:1; Acts 11:2 [80]). What Wall fails to observe is that the Jewish believers in Acts 11:2 never mention the “conversion” of the Gentiles, and that the hostile reaction in Jonah comes from Jonah himself! These neglected factors reflect on the sixth and final point in Wall’s discussion: the fact that God “rebut” this “hostile reaction.” Wall’s conclusions cannot be sustained by the evidence he adduces.

¹³⁵ There is some debate over the term “God-fearer” in contemporary scholarship. For an extensive discussion of the issue, see Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. B.W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 51–126. It is important to note that Luke uses this expression (φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν [Acts 10:2]) to describe Cornelius, regardless of whether it was used to describe a particular group of people in the first century.

¹³⁶ Edith Humphrey notes the way that Cornelius’ filtered report adds to the narrative: “Cornelius’ third vision [report] ... is more vivid ... describing Cornelius’ action of prayer as preparatory for the vision, emphasizing the glory of the epiphany, disclosing God’s active stance of hearing and remembering (10:30), and adding Cornelius’ own expectation that God has commanded Peter to give him a word (10:33)” (“Collision of Modes—Vision and Determining Argument in Acts 10:1–11:18,” *Semeia* 71 [1995]: 76).

Peter's Vision (Acts 10:10–20)

10 ἐγένετο δὲ πρόσπεινος καὶ ἤθελεν γεύσασθαι. παρασκευαζόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐγένετο ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἔκστασις 11 καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεφγμένον καὶ καταβαῖνον σκευὸς τι ὡς ὀθόνην μεγάλην τέσσαρσιν ἄρχαῖς καθιέμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 12 ἐν ᾗ ὑπῆρχεν πάντα τὰ τετράποδα καὶ ἔρπετά τῆς γῆς καὶ πετεινά τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. 13 καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ πρὸς αὐτόν· ἀναστάς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε. 14 ὁ δὲ Πέτρος εἶπεν· μηδαμῶς, κύριε, ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἔφαγον πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον. 15 καὶ φωνὴ πάλιν ἐκ δευτέρου πρὸς αὐτόν· ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν, σὺ μὴ κοίνου. 16 τοῦτο δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τρίς καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνελήμφθη τὸ σκεῦος εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. 17 Ὡς δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ διηπόρει ὁ Πέτρος τί ἂν εἴη τὸ ὄραμα ὃ εἶδεν, ἰδοὺ οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ Κορνηλίου διερωτήσαντες τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ Σίμωνος ἐπέστησαν ἐπὶ τὸν πυλῶνα, 18 καὶ φωνήσαντες ἐπυνθάνοντο εἰ Σίμων ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος Πέτρος ἐνθάδε ξενίζεται. 19 Τοῦ δὲ Πέτρου διενθυμουμένου περὶ τοῦ ὁράματος εἶπεν [αὐτῷ] τὸ πνεῦμα· ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες τρεῖς ζητοῦντές σε, 20 ἀλλὰ ἀναστάς κατάβηθι καὶ πορεύου σὺν αὐτοῖς μηδὲν διακρινόμενος ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀπέσταλκα αὐτούς.

10 He became hungry and wanted to eat. While they were preparing something, a trance came over him, 11 and he saw heaven opened and some kind of vessel descending, like a great sheet, coming down by its four corners, upon the earth. 12 In it were all the four-footed creatures and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the air. 13 There was a voice (saying) to him, “Arise, Peter, sacrifice¹³⁷ and eat.” 14 But Peter replied, “Absolutely not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything defiled or unclean.” 15 Again, the voice (said) to him a second time: “That which God cleansed, you must stop calling defiled.” 16 This happened three times, and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven. 17 While Peter was confused about what the vision he saw might mean, behold the men sent by Cornelius, having been directed to Simon’s house, were standing at the gate. 18 Calling out, they asked if Simon, the one called Peter, was lodging there. 19 As Peter wondered about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 Arise, go down, and travel with them without questioning, for I have sent them.”

¹³⁷ The translation of θύω poses some difficulty. Although it could be used in the sense of general “killing” (cf. John 10:10), it is much more commonly used in the sense of “sacrifice” or “slaughter” for a celebratory meal (BDAG, s.v. “θύω”). Elsewhere, Luke uses it only with the latter two meanings (“slaughter for a celebratory meal”: Luke 15:23, 27, 30; “sacrifice”: Luke 22:7; Acts 14:13, 18). I have chosen “sacrifice” because I think it best fits the context (see also Barrett, *Acts*, 507). There is no reason to oppose this translation on the *a priori* grounds that “unclean animals ... cannot be ritually slaughtered” (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 348; cf. also Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 455). The stark contrast between the unclean animals and the standards of sacrifice could be precisely what the narrator is trying to achieve.

This is an allegorical vision—a vision that does not make sense in itself, but requires interpretation.¹³⁸ As such, this scene stands in contrast to the rest of the dream-visions in Luke-Acts.¹³⁹ The allegorical nature of the vision, however, is not immediately apparent; it becomes clear only in Peter's interpretation of his experience found later in the narrative (Acts 10:34–35). Initially, Peter responds to the allegorical elements of the vision as literal commands.¹⁴⁰

As with the visions of Zechariah, Mary, and Saul, Peter's response to his vision begins in 10:14 while the vision is still taking place: “Absolutely not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything defiled or unclean.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Luke usually presents “theorematic” visions, which tend to be more straightforward. This is not to say that theorematic visions resist interpretation, especially in the text of Luke-Acts. There is, however, a palpable difference between the theorematic vision to Mary that is interpreted in terms of messianic expectations and this vision of unclean animals that causes Peter so much confusion.

¹³⁹ The only possible exception would be the “tongues as of fire” in the Pentecost scene (Acts 2:3). In that passage, however, there is no attempt to interpret the visual aspect of the dream-vision. The crowd gathers at the sound of the loud noise and comments only on the fact that the disciples are speaking numerous languages (2:6–13).

¹⁴⁰ It should be noted that Peter's vision contains interesting allusions to material from Luke's Gospel. The first is to Jesus' baptism. In both texts, the recipient of the vision is praying (προσεύχομαι [Acts 10:9; cf. Luke 3:21]), and sees heaven (οὐρανός) opened (ἀνοίγω [Acts 10:10; cf. Luke 3:21]). Since Jesus' baptism stands at the beginning of his ministry in Luke, the allusion to this scene in Peter's vision underscores the importance and significance of this episode. Another allusive feature of this vision is the use of the terms ὁθόνη and ἀναλαμβάνω. The word ὁθόνη is used only here and in the retelling of this passage in Acts 11:5. It is used nowhere else in the NT. The related diminutive, ὁθόνιον, is found only once in the NT at Luke 24:12. There it is used of Jesus' burial wrappings. The verb ἀναλαμβάνω is not used in the Gospel, but is found four times in Acts prior to this passage. Three of these four are found in Acts 1, all referring to Jesus being “taken up” from the disciples. These references back to Jesus become all the more important given the allegorical nature of this vision, the voice of which is never identified in the original narration.

¹⁴¹ NA²⁷ suggests an allusion to Ezek 4:14 in the marginal notes. Indeed, the context of this prophetic passage heightens the reader's sensitivity to Peter's confused—and even repulsed—response. See Ezek 4:12–15: καὶ ἐγκρυφίαν κρήθινον φάγεσαι αὐτὰ ἐν βολβίτοις κόπρου ἀνθρωπίνης ἐγκρύψεις αὐτὰ κατ' ὀφθαλμούς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐρεῖς τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ οὕτως φάγονται οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἀκάθαρτα ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ εἶπα μηδαμῶς κύριε θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἰδοὺ ἡ ψυχὴ μου οὐ μεμιάνται ἐν ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ θνησιμαίον καὶ θηριάλωτον οὐ βέβρωκα ἀπὸ γενέσεώς μου ἕως τοῦ νῦν οὐδὲ εἰσελήλυθεν εἰς τὸ στόμα μου πᾶν κρέας ἔωλον καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με ἰδοὺ δέδωκά σοι βόλβιτα βοῶν ἀντὶ τῶν βολβίτων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ ποιήσεις τοὺς ἄρτους σου ἐπ' αὐτῶν (“Barley loaves, you shall eat them; you shall cook them over human excrement in their sight. You will say, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘In this manner the sons of Israel will eat things that are unclean among the Gentiles.’” Then I said, “*Surely not, Lord*, God of Israel. Behold, my soul has not been defiled by uncleanness. I have not eaten a carcass or an animal killed by wild beasts from my birth until now. No spoiled meat has entered

Lest the message of the vision be dismissed, it is repeated twice more (10:15–16).¹⁴² Strangely, Peter's initial, literal understanding of this vision is precisely what emphasizes its allegorical import. The reader is not encouraged to take this vision at face value—a divine statement overturning food laws—because Peter does not even consider this as an option.¹⁴³ In v. 17, Peter's initial objection turns to incomprehension in the wake of the vision: "Peter was confused¹⁴⁴ about what the vision he saw might mean."¹⁴⁵

Since some criticisms of Lukan theology have centered on the Cornelius–Peter episode,¹⁴⁶ it is interesting to note what the Spirit does, and

my mouth." The Lord said to me, "Behold, I have given you the excrement of oxen instead of the excrement of humans. You will make your loaves upon it"). David Handy notes the broader parallels between the two passages ("The Gentile Pentecost," 45–46).

¹⁴² Far from establishing a pattern of immediate acceptance, Peter becomes the first to resist heavenly direction: "The repetition is to show the divine initiative overcoming human resistance, which symbolizes the narrative development to follow: Peter resists God's initiative, then the leaders in Jerusalem (11:1–18), then the members of the Pharisaic party in Antioch (15:1–2)" (Johnson, *Acts*, 185).

¹⁴³ So also Haenchen (*Acts of the Apostles*, 348). For discussions of this passage in relation to the abrogation of dietary regulations, see Michael Pettem ("Luke's Great Omission and His View of the Law," *NTS* 42 [1996]: 35–54) and John Elliot ("Household and Meals VS Temple Purity: Replication Patterns in Luke-Acts," *BTB* 21 [1991]: 102–108). Mark Plunkett, in an attempt to bolster the redactional theory of Dibelius, has argued that Luke takes the tradition of Peter's vision and relocates it in the context of Acts 10 in an attempt to show the overturning of ethnocentricity, rather than the overturning of the purity ethic ("Ethnocentricity and Salvation History in the Cornelius Episode [Acts 10:1–11:18]," *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1985 [SBLSP 24; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985], 465–479). Humphrey, on the other hand, argues for a more polyvalent reading within the narrative and rhetorical context: "The vision, then, offers several connected but different directions of thought—the breadth of God's household, the importance of direct action in the Gentile domain, the implication that purity laws may not apply anymore, and so on" ("Collision of Modes," 81). Similarly, Witherup suggests that the food in Peter's vision is symbolic of the larger issue of table fellowship ("Cornelius," 59).

¹⁴⁴ Luke's use of διαπορέω here is interesting. As noted in chapter 1, doubtful and confused reactions to dream-visions are prevalent in both Jewish and non-Jewish literature of the Graeco-Roman era. A Greek inscription describing a vision of Sarapis to a certain Xenainetos also employs διαπορέω. This inscription describes a dream seen by Xenainetos, in which Sarapis urges him to tell Eurynomos to welcome both Sarapis and his sister Isis. The inscription relates that when Xenainetos awoke he "was uncertain (διαπορέω) as to what should be done, because Eurynomos was his political opponent" (*IG* X, 2, fasc. 1, no. 255, lines 7–8; cited in [and translated by] Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1402).

¹⁴⁵ As Johnson observes: "Certainly [Luke] is in no doubt, nor has he left the reader in any doubt, concerning *God's* intentions. . . . The struggle Luke seeks to communicate to the reader is the process of *human* decision-making as the Church tries to catch up to God's initiative" (*Acts*, 186–187).

¹⁴⁶ See the discussion of Haenchen and Pervo in both the introduction and chapter 2.

does not say in response to Peter's confusion. Elsewhere in the biblical tradition, allegorical visions require the mediating function of an interpreting angel (e.g., in Zechariah and Daniel).¹⁴⁷ The reader might expect, therefore, some sort of divine mediation explaining the vision. This passage does feature mediation, but of a different kind. Instead of explaining what the vision means, the Spirit gives Peter yet another command: "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise, go down, and travel with them without questioning, for *I* have sent them."¹⁴⁸

It is in Cornelius' house¹⁴⁹ that the reader first encounters an interpretation of Peter's vision. In 10:28, Peter now seems far from perplexed about the meaning of the vision: "God has made it clear to me that I should call no one impure or unclean."¹⁵⁰ To come to this conclu-

¹⁴⁷ Note the multiple examples of angelic mediation of allegorical visions in Zechariah 1–8 and Daniel 7–12. Humphrey notes this same lack of mediation in light of the extensive mediation found in later Christian visionary literature like the Shepherd of Hermas ("Collision of Modes," 73).

¹⁴⁸ Note the variation in agency similar to that found in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (see p. 184 n. 65 above). The three men are sent by Cornelius on orders from an angel (10:5, 8). Now it is the Spirit who sent them. In direct contrast to Haenchen's suggestion that God's actions remove all doubt in this story, Tannehill notices an important contingency at this point in the narrative: "Peter will discover the meaning of his vision *only if* he follows the Spirit's prompting" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:129 [emphasis mine]). As Tannehill points out later in his analysis, there is a sharp contrast in the brief command, "that which God cleansed, you must stop calling defiled" (10:15): "The command gains its force by presenting a sharp warning of the *potential conflict between divine and human action*" (2:132 [emphasis mine]). Although Tannehill does not pursue the issue along grammatical lines, it is also important to note the use of μή plus the present imperative; this combination bears the implication that the addressee is to stop doing something that he or she is doing currently (see, for example, C.D.F. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* [2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 135; and cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 184). The potential for conflict exists because the act of regarding Gentiles as unclean is already ongoing. God may be telling Peter what to do; correcting the situation, however, requires that Peter (and his fellow Jewish Christians) *stop* what they are doing and act in accordance with this directive. As Plunkett puts it: "Haenchen overlooks the fact that the connection between sign and result in this story is accomplished solely through the obedience of Cornelius and Peter" ("Ethnocentricity," 473). It is also important to note that the Spirit does not draw a connection between the visitors and Peter's vision (*contra* Johnson, *Acts*, 185).

¹⁴⁹ Humphrey argues convincingly that the repeated use of "house" imagery (οἶκος and οἰκία) is very significant in this passage in that it emphasizes the crossing of boundaries, first by the angel (10:3; cf. 11:13) and then by the messengers of Cornelius (10:23) and by Peter (10:25, 27 ["Collision of Modes," 76–77]). See also Witherup, "Cornelius," 50.

¹⁵⁰ Again, Haenchen removes Peter from any participation in this conclusion: "The *author* thus shows how Peter's vision is to be understood" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 350 n. 5 [emphasis mine]).

sion, Peter has to make a deliberate, interpretive move.¹⁵¹ From a vision involving a divine command to kill and eat animals considered unclean according to Jewish dietary regulations and a command from the Spirit to go with the three men “without questioning,” Peter perceives that

¹⁵¹ Peter’s conclusion in v. 28 has initiated an interpretive controversy among scholars. For the most part, this controversy revolves around scholarly understandings of the visions in Acts. For those who view the text from a redactional perspective, Luke’s combination of the vision in 10:11–16 and Peter’s subsequent conclusions in 10:28–29 and 34–43 is suspect. As Barrett has claimed, “[a]n important difference, however, remains [between 10:11–16 and 10:28 ff.], and it is at least sufficient to cause the reader to wonder whether Luke has given the vision a meaning different from that which it originally bore” (*Acts*, 494). Even within this category of scholarship, there is dissension over whether Luke is linking two different sources, creatively redacting one source, or accurately reflecting a single source tradition (for a concise summary of such opinions, see Menzies, *Early Christian Pneumatology*, 264 n. 3). There are also some who would gloss over any apparent contradiction or problem. Fitzmyer, for example, comments: “The abolition of dietary regulations has a further consequence; it explains why Peter has been instructed by the Spirit to accompany Cornelius’ messengers, whom he himself has hosted, and to come to Cornelius’ house” (*Acts*, 461).

Gaventa, Johnson and Tannehill come closer to what I think is a more correct understanding of the passage by focusing on the importance of Peter’s own interpretation of events. Johnson notes, “Peter’s characterization represents an advance in learning; he now has made a connection between the vision and the events in which he is involved: the terms ‘common and unclean’ apply not only to foods but also to categories of persons. God ‘showed him’ not only through the vision but also through his interaction with these Gentiles, and hearing their story” (*Acts*, 190). Tannehill rightly couches his remarks as a refutation of Haenchen’s claim that “these divine incursions [in 10:11–11:18] have such compelling force that all doubt in the face of them *must* be stilled. ... here faith loses its true character of decision, and the obedience from faith which Luke would have liked to portray turns into something utterly different: very nearly the twitching of human puppets” (Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 362; cited in *Narrative Unity* 2:128). Although he does not specifically comment on the “allegorical” quality of Peter’s vision, Tannehill does notice that the vision is incomplete in and of itself. The character must interpret his vision in light of his experience in the context of the passage: “It is through this process that the recipients of the initial visions discover the purpose of their visions. ... it is on the basis of the previous series of events, including the report about Cornelius’ vision, that Peter draws a conclusion about the meaning of his own vision in 10:28” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:130).

Gaventa highlights the significance of Peter’s interpretive process by ascribing to it the language of conversion: “By means of the issue of *hospitality*, Luke demonstrates that the conversion of the first Gentile required the conversion of the church as well. Indeed, in Luke’s account, Peter and company undergo a change that is more wrenching by far than the change experienced by Cornelius” (*From Darkness to Light*, 109). Witherup agrees that Peter is undergoing his own form of conversion here, and notes the irony in the way that Luke characterizes Peter in contrast to Cornelius: “Cornelius, the non-believer, immediately does without question what the messenger in the vision asks. Peter, on the other hand, resists his vision with a forceful double negative (10.14; cf. 11.8), even after it occurs three times” (“Cornelius,” 49).

God has shown him not to consider *people* unclean. Peter's interpretation continues to unfold in v. 34: "With certainty I understand that God is not partial."¹⁵² Up to this point in the narrative, Peter has not given a report of his own vision. Instead, it is Peter's *interpretation* of his vision that is significant for the events that follow.¹⁵³ Peter's interpretation culminates when the Spirit "falls upon" those listening to him:

¹⁵² For Tannehill, Peter's interaction with Cornelius is an integral part of this conclusion. Cornelius' more elaborate description of his own vision "prompts Peter to draw a further conclusion about his vision. It not only reveals how he must act toward Gentiles but also reveals *God's* acceptance of Gentiles (10:34–35), which Peter is now willing to recognize" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:130). Humphrey suggests: "Cornelius' vision is equally a prerequisite for Peter to speak as he does. By introducing his speech with a commentary or interpretation of the words of Cornelius, Peter presents himself as one who is as much a convert to the new situation as Cornelius will be a convert to Christianity ('Collision of Modes,' 73). Johnson draws similar conclusions (*Acts*, 194). Witherup, however, puts it too strongly: "It is only upon hearing Cornelius' first-person account of his vision that Peter perceives the importance of his own vision" ("Cornelius," 52). On the contrary, Peter's statement in 10:28 already indicates the beginning of his perception of the importance of his vision. Lampe emphasized the importance of the Spirit in the interpretive process: "It is through the express guidance of the Spirit, with the closely related method of divine revelation through visions and angelic appearances, that St. Peter is led to understand that the sphere of the Kingdom, and so of the Spirit's activity, must embrace Gentile as well as Jew" ("Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," 197).

¹⁵³ Peter's interpretation of his experience pervades his speech. As J. Ian H. McDonald observes: Peter's "daring rejection of the parameters of purity is enjoined by God (10.34–35), is the outcome of Jesus' ministry (10.43), and is endorsed by the Spirit (10.44–48): three powerful 'proofs'... . Thus, against those who would controvert the policy decision in view, the story of Jesus redefines, justifies and lends credibility to the grounds on which the new policy will be based, namely, *the clearly perceived will of God in Christ*" ("Rhetorical Issue and Rhetorical Strategy in Luke 10:25–37 and Acts 10:1–11:18," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* [JNTSup 90; eds. Stanley Porter and Thomas Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], 62 [emphasis added]). Humphrey's comments are even more to the point for the present study: "The effect of this ad hoc insertion of interpretation into the action, rather than its formalized inclusion at the close of each vision, is such as to characterize interpretation as part of the natural unfolding of events—an emergence of understanding, one accessible to anyone of reason and insight. Such an organic inclusion of interpretation, over against the more common rhythm of vision—*angelus interpres* found in esoteric literature has a rhetorical power that draws the reader into the discussion. Here is a significant case in which Haenchen's dictum regarding divine compulsion is not subtle enough. There is an undeniable rhetorical force to the narrative, but its character is the type that wins by finesse, rather than by playing an oracular or visionary trump card" ("Collision of Modes," 74). Witherup makes a similar argument: "In short, Peter is shown gradually to grow in the awareness that the gospel is meant for the Gentiles too" ("Cornelius," 60).

“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people—people who received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” (10:47).¹⁵⁴

Peter’s vision report comes in Acts 11:1–18, after he is questioned¹⁵⁵ by “the circumcised ones” in Jerusalem.

1 Ἦκουσαν δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ ὄντες κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ἐδέξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. 2 Ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβη Πέτρος εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ, διεκρίνοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς 3 λέγοντες ὅτι εἰσῆλθες πρὸς ἄνδρας ἀκροβυστίαν ἔχοντας καὶ συνέφαγες αὐτοῖς. 4 Ἀρξάμενος δὲ Πέτρος ἐξετίθετο αὐτοῖς καθεξῆς λέγων· 5 ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐν πόλει Ἰόππῃ προσευχόμενος καὶ εἶδον ἐν ἑκστάσει ὄραμα, καταβαίνον σκευὸς τι ὡς ὀθονὴν μεγάλην τέσσαρσιν ἄρχαῖς καθιεμένην ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἦλθεν ἄχρι ἐμοῦ. 6 εἰς ἣν ἀτενίσας κατενόουν καὶ εἶδον τὰ τετράποδα τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ ἐρπετὰ καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. 7 ἤκουσα δὲ καὶ φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι· ἀναστάς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε. 8 εἶπον δέ· μηδαμῶς, κύριε, ὅτι κοινὸν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον οὐδέποτε εἰσῆλθην εἰς τὸ στόμα μου. 9 ἀπεκρίθη δὲ φωνὴ ἐκ δευτέρου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ· ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν, σὺ μὴ κοῖνου. 10 τοῦτο δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τρίς, καὶ ἀνεσπάσθη πάλιν ἅπαντα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. 11 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἑξαυτῆς τρεῖς ἄνδρες ἐπέστησαν ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐν ᾗ ἤμην, ἀπεσταλμένοι ἀπὸ Καισαρείας πρὸς με. 12 εἶπεν δὲ τὸ πνεῦμά μοι συνελθεῖν αὐτοῖς μηδὲν διακρίναντα. ἦλθον δὲ σὺν ἐμοὶ καὶ οἱ ἕξ ἀδελφοὶ οὗτοι καὶ εἰσῆλθόμεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἀνδρός. 13 ἀπήγγειλεν δὲ ἡμῖν πῶς εἶδεν [τὸν] ἄγγελον ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ σταθέντα καὶ εἰπόντα· ἀπόστειλον εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ μετάπεμψαι Σίμωνα τὸν ἐπικαλούμενον Πέτρον, 14 ὃς λαλήσει ῥήματα πρὸς σέ ἐν οἷς σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἶκός σου. 15 ἐν δὲ τῷ ἄρξασθαί με λαλεῖν ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ὥσπερ καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ. 16 ἐμνήσθην δὲ τοῦ ῥήματος τοῦ κυρίου ὡς ἔλεγεν· Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ βαπτισθήσεσθε ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. 17 εἰ οὖν τὴν ἴσην δωρεάν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ἐγὼ τίς ἤμην δυνατὸς κωλύσαι τὸν θεόν; 18 Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ταῦτα ἡσυχάσαν καὶ ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν λέγοντες· ἄρα καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὁ θεὸς τὴν μετάνοιαν εἰς ζωὴν ἔδωκεν.

1 The apostles and the believers in Judea also heard that the Gentiles received the word of God. 2 When Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised were questioning him, 3 saying, “You went in with men who are uncircumcised and ate with them.” 4 Peter began explaining it to them point by point, saying, 5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and I saw a vision in a trance. Some kind of vessel descended, like a great sheet coming down by its four corners from

¹⁵⁴ Peter’s conclusion shows the dramatic extent to which personal interpretation pervades this passage. As Tannehill observes: “The Jewish Christians are led to draw a surprising new conclusion not because they are being treated like puppets but because they discover Gentiles who share their experience of God” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:130).

¹⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that the verb here (*διακρίνομαι*) is the same as the one used in 10:20, in which Peter is told to go with the men “without doubting/questioning.”

heaven, and it came near to me. 6 Gazing at it, I was examining it and saw the four-footed creatures of the earth, and the wild beasts, and the reptiles, and the birds of the air. 7 I heard a voice saying to me, 'Arise, Peter, sacrifice and eat.' 8 But I said, 'Absolutely not, Lord, for nothing defiled or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9 The voice answered a second time from heaven, 'That which God cleansed, you must stop calling defiled.' 10 This happened three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven. 11 And behold, at that moment three men stood outside the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 The Spirit told me to go with them without questioning. These six brothers went with me, and we entered the man's house. 13 He reported to us how he saw an angel standing in his house and saying, 'send to Joppa and summon Simon, the one called Peter, 14 who will tell you teachings by which you and your whole house will be saved.' 15 When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as it did upon us in the beginning. 16 I remembered the word of the Lord, how he used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 Therefore, if God gave them the same gift as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder God?" 18 Having heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying, "So God has given the repentance to life to the Gentiles as well."

Although the narrative asserts that Peter "[explained] it to them point by point (11:4)," what is interesting for this discussion are the ways in which Peter's account *differs* from the original narration of his vision.¹⁵⁶ The first significant variation occurs in v. 5. In 10:11, Peter sees heaven open and a sheet-like vessel "descending ... upon the earth." Peter describes it as "[descending] ... *from heaven*" in 11:5.¹⁵⁷ More than a minor semantic difference, this variation signals a rhetorical trend in Peter's report,¹⁵⁸ focusing on God's role in this event. An even subtler example of this reorientation of the story is found in Peter's response to the voice. In the original narration, Peter replies, "By no means,

¹⁵⁶ See also Witherup, "Cornelius," 53. As Tannehill suggests, Peter is recounting the events according to the order in which he himself experienced them (*Narrative Unity*, 2:144).

¹⁵⁷ Commentators often overlook this emphasis in Peter's retelling. Fitzmyer mentions the "heavenly direction" of "Peter's justification" in the beginning of his discussion of Acts 10:1–11:18 (*Acts*, 448), but does not pick up this thread in his discussion of the individual passages. The reader will find that οὐρανός is added to the story again in 11:9. See also Squires, *Plan of God*, 118.

¹⁵⁸ As Humphrey has observed about the retellings of visions throughout Acts 10–11: "very significant details are added to the subsequent retellings; moreover, interpretations or applications are placed *within* the second or third tellings, as part of the vision, and not as mere interpretation or gloss" ("Collision of Modes," 75).

Lord, because I have never eaten anything impure or unclean” (10:14). In 11:8, this becomes: “Absolutely not, Lord, for nothing defiled or unclean has ever entered my mouth.” In the original, the focus is on Peter: he is the one who has never committed the impropriety of eating impure food. Like other elements of this retelling, Peter’s own role as a decision maker is downplayed in his response. The directional variation appears again in 11:9;¹⁵⁹ describing the second utterance of the “voice,” Peter adds that it came “from heaven.” This addition is underscored by the fact that the actual statements made by the voice are reported verbatim.

The next significant difference comes in the final report of Cornelius’ vision.¹⁶⁰ Peter’s report of this vision is both the shortest (excluding, of course, 10:8) and the one that varies the most from the original. The mention of Cornelius’ prayers and alms are left out completely.¹⁶¹ Instead, Peter supplants part of the original narration of the vision with his own interpretation: “[Peter] will tell you teachings by which you and your whole house will be saved” (11:14).¹⁶² Like Paul’s retellings, Peter adds this interpretive layer to the account based on his subsequent experience in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10:23–46). This interpretive addition follows the same trend as the other variations in Peter’s report, emphasizing divine initiative far more than it was emphasized in the original account.

¹⁵⁹ Limitations of space preclude the mention of every single syntactic difference between the two accounts. I am, therefore, passing over issues like the change of order in reporting the animals and the addition of *θήματα* in the second version. Instead, I will focus only on variants that I find significant to the narrative.

¹⁶⁰ The translation of 11:12 in the NRSV (“The Spirit told me...not to make a distinction between them and us”) is very misleading. In fact, the same participle (of *διακρίνομαι*) is used here and in 10:20. The only possible reason for altering the translation would be a weak textual variant (*ἀνακρίνομαι* for *διακρίνομαι*, attested only in P⁷⁴).

¹⁶¹ This omission is somewhat striking. It would seem that some knowledge of Cornelius’ piety and compassion for the Jews might make the Jerusalem believers more sympathetic toward him. I would argue, however, that this omission serves a very specific rhetorical purpose. Peter is attempting to show that it is God who has authorized his interaction with Gentiles. It is important, therefore, to focus on God’s role rather than on the worthiness and piety of Cornelius.

¹⁶² Indeed, this variation is remarkable because Peter is willing to place his own interpretation on the lips of a divine emissary. As Tannehill notes: “In light of events Peter is confident that this was the purpose of the sending. He does not hesitate to report the angel’s words in a way that makes this clear” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:132). By adding the element of salvation, Tannehill observes, Peter is also interpreting this entire experience in light of what he himself proclaimed at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:21 [*Narrative Unity*, 2:144]).

The final variation in the report comes in Peter's recollection "of the word of the Lord" (11:16).¹⁶³ Such a recollection is not mentioned in the original narration, where we read that Peter and the "circumcised ones of faith" were "amazed ... that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles" (10:45). This final variant is an overt manifestation of what Peter has done throughout his vision report. He has rhetorically manipulated the story to refocus attention on the divine provenance of the event. In the house of Cornelius, Peter makes it clear that *God* has shown him to call no person unclean, and that *God* is not partial. Among the Jerusalem believers, Peter focuses on the heavenly aspect of his vision. He claims that the angel told Cornelius that Peter would have a message by which Cornelius and his house would be saved. Finally, in response to the Holy Spirit being poured out on the Gentiles, Peter remembers the word of the Lord and comes to the conclusion of his defense: "If God gave them the same gift ... who was I to hinder God?" (11:17).¹⁶⁴ These character-filtered variations perform two functions. First, they illustrate Peter's perception of God's will based on his own experience and the experience of Cornelius. Second, they represent Peter's attempt to convince others that his perception is correct. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that this passage—a passage in which *Peter* attributes more action to God than does the original narrative—has been described as *God's* "twitching of human puppets."¹⁶⁵ On the contrary, Peter's own perception of God's will evolves throughout the course of Acts 10–11.¹⁶⁶ Edith Humphrey's remarks serve as a fitting conclusion to this section of the present discussion:

¹⁶³ Tannehill mentions the fact that Peter here adds to his recollection the words of Jesus (Acts 1:5 [*Narrative Unity*, 2:144–145]). See also Johnson, *Acts*, 198.

¹⁶⁴ Although much of my discussion is set in contrast to interpretations like those of Haenchen and Pervo—interpretations that detract from the human participation in the story—it is important to note that Peter's filtered version of events in Acts 11 serves a very different function for the narrative audience. Peter must demonstrate for those challenging him that the extension of the mission to the Gentiles was enacted strictly on the basis of God's initiative (Johnson, *Acts*, 200).

¹⁶⁵ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 362. As Tannehill argues: "The narrative presents a more sophisticated and complex account of humans discerning the will of God than Haenchen thought" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:131). Witherup makes a similar argument about Peter's focus on the role of God, but adduces different evidence than I have ("Cornelius," 61).

¹⁶⁶ The idea of character development as it relates to biblical texts has been a subject of debate. In her study on the Gospel of Mark, Mary Ann Tolbert has summarized one side of the argument: "In ancient literature, characters were more illustrative than representational... . The illustrative characters of ancient literature are static, mono-

While it is certainly the case that God is presented as the main actor in this episode, human decisions and interpretations of divine visions are evident throughout. Unlike the technique of the apocalypse, the visions are not given an authoritative interpretation by an *angelus interpretis*; rather, they are understood through the mediation, speeches, and unfolding events enacted by the human players in the drama. Moreover, Luke seems happy to import interpretation into the visions as the action develops, demonstrating how human understanding enriches the significance of the visions. The Cornelius–Peter episode is obviously about coming to understand God’s purposes for the Gentile community, but at every step of the way, human thinking and action are involved. Thus, the visions do not present a *fait accompli* but are artfully presented and combined to lead the hearers within the story, and the readers of the story, to certain conclusions. The way in which Luke carefully intertwines narrative, argumentation, and vision-report may stand as a picture of his view of the relationship between the human and divine—here we see cooperation rather than coercion, disclosure rather than determination.¹⁶⁷

lithic figures who do not grow or develop psychologically. They have fundamentally the same characteristics at the end as at the beginning” (*Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989] 76–77). Using the slightly different nomenclature of “flat” and “round” characters, Tannehill has argued that two of the only “round” characters in Acts are Lysias and Felix. His primary reason for this classification is that both of these characters behave in ways that exhibit internal conflict and tension about how they should react/respond to Paul (*Narrative Unity*, 2:295 and 2:303). To the contrary, I would argue that both Peter and Paul can be described as “round” or developing characters based on this same criterion. In the scope of Luke–Acts as a two volume work, Peter develops dramatically from the sobbing wretch in Luke 22 to the self-proclaimed initiator of the mission to the Gentiles in Acts 15. On a more microcosmic level, Peter’s confusion regarding his vision in chapter 10 exhibits internal tension and conflict. For Paul, there is also a great deal of internal conflict and tension. Frustrated by the fact that Jews are rejecting his message, Paul repeatedly threatens that he will now turn and go to the Gentiles (13:46, 18:6, and 28:28). Yet in both of the instances that precede chapter 28, Paul returns to preach his message in the synagogues (14:1 and 18:19). Certainly, we do not see in these characters the in-depth psychological development of, say, Joyce’s Dedalus. On the other hand, one should not dismiss the development that does occur in these characters with sweeping generalizations about ancient literature. As Johnson concludes of Peter in Acts 11: “When we turn to the content of Peter’s defense speech, we are struck above all by the way it reveals a *growth in his own understanding*. Peter is no longer fixated at the stage of table-fellowship. He has begun to think in terms of the gift of God for salvation” (*Acts*, 201 [emphasis mine]).

¹⁶⁷ Humphrey, “Collision of Modes,” 82.

Peter and Herod: A Double-Vision of Deliverance and Death (Acts 12:7–10, 21–23)

In Acts 12:7–10, Luke describes in vivid detail Peter’s angelic deliverance from prison. Equally vivid are the details of Herod’s own angelic visitation, ending in his grotesque death. In these scenes, Luke’s use of the double-vision takes a peculiar turn, with the rescue of Peter and execution of Herod linked together by the angel’s “touch.”¹⁶⁸

12:7 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπέστη καὶ φῶς ἔλαμψεν ἐν τῷ οἰκήματι· πατάξας δὲ τὴν πλευρὰν τοῦ Πέτρου ἤγειρεν αὐτὸν λέγων· ἀνάστα ἐν τάχει. καὶ ἐξέπεσαν αὐτοῦ αἱ ἀλύσεις ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν. 8 εἶπεν δὲ ὁ ἄγγελος πρὸς αὐτόν· ζῶσαι καὶ ὑπόδησαι τὰ σανδάλια σου. ἐποίησεν δὲ οὕτως. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· περιβαλοῦ τὸ ἱμάτιόν σου καὶ ἀκολούθει μοι. 9 καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἠκολούθει καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει ὅτι ἀληθὲς ἐστὶν τὸ γινόμενον διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου· ἐδόκει δὲ ὄραμα βλέπειν. 10 διελθόντες δὲ πρώτην φυλακὴν καὶ δευτέραν ἦλθαν ἐπὶ τὴν πύλιν τὴν σιδηρὰν τὴν φέρουσαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν, ἣτις αὐτομάτῃ ἠνοίγη αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξελθόντες προῆλθον ῥύμην μίαν, καὶ εὐθέως ἀπέστη ὁ ἄγγελος ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ.

¹⁶⁸ See the use of πατάσσω in 12:7 and 12:23. Some have suggested that this story emphasizes the adversarial relationship between Peter and Herod (e.g., Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 388). On the contrary, I would argue that the emphasis is on what connects the respective experiences of Peter and Herod. The angel delivers Peter as a servant of God; likewise, the angel strikes down Herod as the enemy of God. The focus is not on the antipathy between these two characters, but on the way that God acts toward each—a focus that is exemplified in the summary of the “word of God” growing and multiplying in Acts 12:24. See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 187. Other scholars have suggested that this story describes one of the many “threats to the mission” in Acts (e.g., Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:151). Tannehill, in fact, devotes almost three pages to such a discussion: “the role of Herod and Pilate in Jesus’ death ... Now another Herod threatens the life of the *leading apostle*... . Peter has been arrested and faces almost certain death. ... the connection between Jesus’ arrest and Peter’s arrest” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:151–153 [emphasis mine]). What seems so odd about this discussion is that it ignores the fact that Peter is about to slip completely out of the picture! He may reappear for a moment in Acts 15, but his role in the narrative is essentially complete. It may be better, therefore, to focus exclusively on Peter’s visionary deliverance in connection with the Passover as Tannehill also does (see p. 219 n. 176 below).

Even less does this chapter of Acts seem to emphasize, as some have suggested, the succession of leadership in the early church. Robert W. Wall, for example, argues: “the evangelist’s purpose is to narrate and indeed authorize the transition of leadership within earliest Christianity from ‘apostolic’ rule, symbolized by Peter, to the second generation of Christian leaders, symbolized by James in Jewish Christianity and especially by Paul in Gentile Christianity” (“Successors to ‘the Twelve’ According to Acts 12:1–17,” *CBQ* 53 [1991]: 630). The problem with this viewpoint is seen most clearly in Wall’s contention that “the ‘apostles’ were a closed group of Twelve” according to Luke (630). Luke’s reference to Paul as an “apostle” in Acts 14:4 and 14 must then be dismissed with little or no supporting evidence from Luke’s narrative (see “Successors,” 630 n. 12).

12:7 Behold an angel of the Lord appeared and light shone in the prison cell; tapping Peter's side, he woke him saying, "Get up, quickly!" His chains fell from his hands. 8 The angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." Peter did so. The angel said to him, "Put on your cloak and follow me." 9 He followed him out, and did not know that what was happening with the angel was real. He thought he was seeing a dream.¹⁶⁹ 10 Passing through the first and second guard posts, they came to the large iron gate leading to the city, which opened for them by itself. Exiting, they went ahead one street, and suddenly the angel departed from him.

Although there are some basic similarities between this account and the angelic prison break in Acts 5:19–21, the respective foci of the two stories are very different. In Acts 5, little description is devoted to what happens during the miraculous escape. Attention is given, instead, to the angel's command that the apostles continue teaching (5:20).¹⁷⁰ The escape in Acts 12 is just the opposite. Peter's role is extremely passive: "the angel even directs the stages by which Peter gets dressed."¹⁷¹ Beyond these directions, the angel offers no command or injunction. Peter is given no direction whatsoever, but is simply left alone in the street.

Character reactions to this vision are similarly odd. As with previous visions seen by believers in Acts, this one inspires no fear in Peter. During the experience, the text describes concisely Peter's obedient acceptance of the angel's command: "[Peter] did so" (ἐποίησεν δὲ οὕτως).¹⁷² What is more interesting is that Peter is unaware of the reality of his escape. He thought he was only dreaming. It is only after the angel departs that Peter "became aware of himself and said, 'now I know for sure that the Lord sent out his angel to deliver me from the hand of Herod and all that the people of the Jews were expecting'" (12:11). What he thought to be a dream, he now perceives not only as God's

¹⁶⁹ I am translating *ὄραμα* as a "dream" here because the context makes it clear that Peter is sleeping (see *κοιμάομαι* in 12:6). On the indistinguishability between waking visions and dreams during sleep based solely on terminology, see the introduction (pp. 8–9 above).

¹⁷⁰ Note also the emphatic repetition of this element in the brief description of the characters' response in 5:21 ("After hearing this, they entered the Temple early in the morning and began to teach").

¹⁷¹ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 383.

¹⁷² Gaventa rightly notes the contrast between this vision and the one in Acts 10: "God's most recent instruction to Peter came through a 'vision,' one he neither understood nor eagerly obeyed (10:17); here he complies even before he understands" (*Acts*, 184).

deliverance from Herod, but also from the maleficence of the unbelieving Jews. His delayed acceptance is mirrored by his fellow believers. Though they are gathered together, praying “constantly” for Peter (12:12; cf. 12:5),¹⁷³ they cannot fathom such a miraculous release. They cannot believe that what they have prayed for has come to pass.¹⁷⁴ When Rhoda announces Peter’s arrival, they tell her she is “crazy” (μαίνομαι).¹⁷⁵ When they finally realize that Peter is, in fact, present, they respond with amazement (12:16). Unlike the extended retellings in Acts 9–11, Peter’s reply is remarkably brief: he silences the group; tells them how the Lord delivered him; tells them to report these things to James and “the brethren”; and leaves—all in one verse.¹⁷⁶ This scene demonstrates what Tannehill describes as the “gap between human understanding and the wonder of God’s ways.”¹⁷⁷ Once again, there is not an immediate correlation between vision and perception of God’s will. For both Peter and his fellow believers, there is a lag as they find it difficult to believe what God has done.

Herod’s own encounter with the angel of the Lord serves as an antithesis to Peter’s experience. After addressing embassies from Tyre and Sidon,¹⁷⁸ Herod is praised by his audience: ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐπεφώνει Θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου (“the people were crying out, ‘God’s voice, not a man’s!’” [Acts 12:22]). Herod’s failure to deny such praise and to “give the glory to God,” brings about a very different kind of touch from the angel of the Lord: παραχρῆμα δὲ ἐπάταξεν αὐτὸν ἄγγελος κυρίου ἄνθ’ ὧν οὐκ ἔδωκεν τὴν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ γενόμενος σκοληκόβρωτος ἐξέψυξεν (“Suddenly, the angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give the glory to God. Devoured by worms, he

¹⁷³ Johnson notes Luke’s use of ἐκτενῶς, an adverb denoting “eagerness and earnestness” (*Acts*, 211).

¹⁷⁴ See also Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 2:155–156) and Gaventa (*Acts*, 185).

¹⁷⁵ Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 385.

¹⁷⁶ Tannehill observes that the language of deliverance (ἐξαίρω and ἐξάγω [12:11; 12:17]), combined with the mention of Passover (12:4), creates a strong connection between Peter’s visionary experience and the exodus from Egypt. Susan Garrett has argued more broadly that the entire scene (Acts 12:1–24) “recapitulates the entire sequence of earthly and cosmic events pertaining to Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension,” and that Herod’s death is representative of the resulting fall of Satan (“Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1–24,” *CBQ* 52 [1990]: 670–677).

¹⁷⁷ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:156. See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 188.

¹⁷⁸ Mark Strom observes unmistakable parallels between Luke’s account of Herod’s death and the oracle against the King of Tyre in Ezek 28, right down to the smiting action of the Lord’s cherub/angel (Ezek 28:16; cf. Acts 12:23) (“An Old Testament Background to Acts 12:20–23,” *NTS* 32 [1986]: 290).

died” [12:23]). Thus, this double vision comprises a striking contrast of perception. Peter does not understand the reality of his angelic encounter until it is over. Herod’s own lack of understanding proves fatal. What he thought to be deserved praise instead became the reason for a divine visitation that results in his death.¹⁷⁹

The Spirit Calls Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1–3)

1 Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὖσαν ἐκκλησίαν προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι ὃ τε Βαρναβᾶς καὶ Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ καὶ Λούκιος ὁ Κυρηναῖος, Μαναὴν τε Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετραάρχου σύντροφος καὶ Σαῦλος. 2 Λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς. 3 τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν. 4 Αὐτοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐκπεμφθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος κατήλθον εἰς Σελεύκειαν, ἐκεῖθεν τε ἀπέπλευσαν εἰς Κύπρον.

1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who was raised with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were performing the service of the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then, after fasting and praying and laying hands upon them, they sent them off. 4 Thus dispatched by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there set sail for Cyprus.

This scene is often read as a dramatic commission, providing explicit divine direction for the missionary excursion of Saul and Barnabas.¹⁸⁰ Of greater interest in the present study is the sequence of actions that render this brief scene one of the most peculiar dream-vision passages in Luke-Acts. The verb *λειτουργέω* (“to serve in worship”) is used only here in Luke-Acts, but occurs frequently in the LXX to translate *תָּשַׁבַּע*, a verb usually associated with priestly service in the sanctuary.¹⁸¹ In v. 2, Luke combines this verb of priestly service with another word that is used only here in Acts: *νηστεύω* (“to fast”). One does find *νηστεύω* in Luke’s Gospel, particularly in the controversy over why Jesus’ disciples

¹⁷⁹ The verb *ἐκψύχω* occurs only three times in the NT. The other two occurrences describe the deaths of Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5:5 and 5:10.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, 2:159) and Johnson (*Acts*, 225).

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Exod 28:35, 29:30, 35:19; Num 1:50, 4:12; 1Sam 2:11; and Joel 2:17.

do not fast (Luke 5:33–35), but it is used only here in Acts. In the LXX, νηστεύω tends to be used in contexts of either mourning¹⁸² or intensive supplication.¹⁸³ The latter may inform the reader's understanding of Acts 13. Read against the background of Jewish Scripture, one may understand the fasting in this passage as a way of seeking God and God's guidance.¹⁸⁴

Seemingly in response to this service and supplication, the Holy Spirit tells the group to set Barnabas and Saul apart for special work. This is not the first time in Luke-Acts that the Spirit has "spoken" to someone; this happens earlier to both Philip (8:29) and Peter (10:19).¹⁸⁵ In those two cases, however, an immediate and obedient response from the character follows. The group in Antioch does not respond this way. Instead, they fast and pray *again*. Although their actions of fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands sound reverent,¹⁸⁶ they still stand in contrast to the more immediate obedience of Philip and Peter.¹⁸⁷ Since the Spirit has spoken and given instructions, why the continued need to fast and pray? It is obvious that the Spirit is the instigator of the

¹⁸² See, for example, Judg 20:26 and 1 Sam 31:13.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Isa 58:3–4, Jer 14:12, Ezra 8:23.

¹⁸⁴ Supplication seems applicable, whereas there is no indication of mourning.

¹⁸⁵ Haenchen demythologizes the event unnecessarily: "Naturally it was one of the 'prophets' who gave the utterance to the Spirit's direction" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 396). Surprisingly, even narrative critics seem to have fallen prey to this tendency. Tannehill suggests: "The Spirit indicates *through a small circle of prophets and teachers* that two of their number should be selected for a particular task" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:160). Spencer's comments are more concrete: "The commission to send Barnabas and Saul on special assignment comes *from* the Holy Spirit *through* the worshipping and fasting congregation" (*Acts*, 137). Given the widespread presence of the Spirit in the dream-visions of Luke-Acts, there is no reason to assume that the Spirit's directions comes through non-verbal "inspiration." When Luke wishes to describe the Spirit's non-verbal direction, he does so (cf. Acts 21:4).

¹⁸⁶ It is interesting to note discussions that make much of the "prayerful" context in which the commissioning scene takes place, but that make no mention of the continuation of the prayer and fasting *after* the Spirit has given direction. Tannehill, for example, asserts: "The commissioning scene in Acts 13:1–3 is also part of the pattern. The beginnings of the missions of Jesus and the apostles are preceded by references to prayer ... which provides opportunity for the action of the Spirit ... and the Spirit leads *directly* to mission" (*Narrative Unity*, 2:161 [emphasis mine]). The point here is that the Spirit's utterance does *not* lead "directly to mission."

¹⁸⁷ Haenchen supposes that 13:3 begins a "second scene" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 396), but does not say why. Nothing in the syntax demands, or even suggests, the passage of time. Similarly, Fitzmyer fixes things by translating the aorist participles (νηστεύσαντες and προσευξάμενοι) with the phrase, "having *completed* their fasting and prayer" (*Acts*, 497 [emphasis mine]). Again, nothing about the syntax requires this nuance.

mission. The reasons for the Antiochene response in the narrative are far less obvious.¹⁸⁸

This response sounds even stranger when one considers the only prior passage in which Luke combines the action of prayer with the laying on of hands. Acts 6:1–6 narrates the request of the twelve that the body of disciples select seven people who will oversee logistical concerns so that the twelve can “attend to prayer and the service of the word” (6:4). After the seven are chosen they are brought before the apostles, who pray and lay their hands¹⁸⁹ upon them (6:6). In this way, the apostles submit a very human decision prayerfully to God. That the Antiochene group’s service and fasting are met with a vision is not so different from other situations in which prayer and visions go hand in hand (cf. Luke 3:21–22, 9:29; Acts 10:9–10). This is the only occasion, however, on which supplicating actions like fasting and prayer *follow* a visionary encounter.¹⁹⁰ This scene raises questions about the direction of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts; these questions will be addressed more fully below.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Adopting David Daube’s suggestion that Acts 13:1–3 recalls the language of setting apart Levites in Num 8 (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [New York: Arno Press, 1956], 224–236), Ernest Best has suggested that the laying on of hands in 13:3 is an “appointment of ‘full-time’ missionaries” (“Acts XIII.1–3,” *JTS* 11 [1960]: 348). As Barrett has noted, however, “Paul seems to have been a full-time Christian worker before” this (*Acts*, 601).

¹⁸⁹ Outside of Acts 6 and 13, the “laying on of hands” is always used in the context of healing (Luke 4:40, 13:13; Acts 9:12 and 17, 28:8) or to bestow the filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17, 19; 19:6).

¹⁹⁰ One exception to this may be the prayer of Saul mentioned by the Lord to Ananias (9:11). That context, however, is remarkably different.

¹⁹¹ Although it does not meet the criteria for this discussion of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, the story of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Acts 14:11–18) deserves some mention if only for the way it contrasts with “real” visionary encounters in the text. Following the healing of the crippled man in vv. 8–10, Paul and Barnabas receive an unexpected reaction: “After the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, ‘the gods have come down to us in human form!’” (14:11). Verse 12 provides the additional detail that the people were calling Barnabas “Zeus” and Paul “Hermes.” The Lystrans see the miraculous healing and misinterpret this as an indication that the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes have come to them in human form. Far from the political rhetoric involved in the acclamation of Herod (Acts 12:22), the original divine appellation in Acts 14:11 is followed by the designation of specific deities in 14:12 and what appear to be repeated attempts on the part of the Lystrans to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas (see both 14:13 and 14:18).

Luke’s criticism of this misinterpretation is far from tacit. First, it is censured within the narrative by the apostles’ response. After ripping their own garments and crying out in protest (14:14), they characterize the Lystrans’ worship as “false” (ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν ματαίων ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ θεὸν ζῶντα [“so that you might turn from these false things to

Multifaceted Witness of the Spirit (Acts 15:28; 19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4, 11–14)

The Holy Spirit's verbal commission in 13:2 is followed by a number of more indirect references to the Spirit's guidance. They are indirect in that the Spirit does not actually speak, as in 8:29, 10:19, and 13:2. Instead, the narrative features characters presenting the viewpoint of the Spirit, and these character-filtered presentations do not always agree with one another. As a whole, these passages paint a complex picture of the Spirit's activity among believers. More accurately, they portray a complex picture of the way characters *perceive* the activity of the Spirit.

'The Holy Spirit thinks so, too' (Acts 15:28)

In Luke's narration of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, one finds the apostles and other individuals considering a very important question: Do the Gentiles need to follow the Law? After a great deal of debate (15:7), Peter states that God chose him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and argues that they should not be burdened with the yoke of the Law (15:10).¹⁹² Paul and Barnabas report on their ministry to the Gentiles (15:12). Then, in 15:13–21, James draws the arguments to a conclusion, declaring finally: "Therefore, *I* have made the determination not to add difficulty to those among the Gentiles who have turned to God" (15:19).¹⁹³ What is so striking about this decision is that it is made

the living God"). The adjective *ματαιός* is used only here in Luke-Acts. It is interesting to note, however, that it appears frequently in the LXX in passages describing "false visions." See, for example, Lam 2:14 (the only example also including the verb *ἐπιστρέφω*); Zech 10:2; Isa 29:8; Ezek 13:6–9, 21:34, and 22:28. Further criticism is implied in Luke's later characterization of this crowd, whose attempts to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas are quickly replaced by their complacency as Paul and Barnabas are stoned by Jews from Antioch and Iconium (14:19).

That the Lystrans are quick to perceive the presence of Zeus and Hermes in their midst suggests the pervasiveness of dream-vision phenomena in the religious experience of the first century. Luke's criticism of this misinterpretation, however, is clear. What is an acceptable medium of revelation for followers of the "living God" is, by contradistinction, part of the "falsehood" of Hellenistic polytheism.

¹⁹² Peter's vision and subsequent interpretations are certainly in the background here. The issue I want to highlight in this passage is that the Holy Spirit is noted as a source of authority in the apostolic letter in 15:28. This is done even though there is no mention of an appeal to God, Jesus, or the Spirit during the council's discussion.

¹⁹³ I have added emphasis here to indicate Luke's redundant and emphatic use of the personal pronoun: *διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω*.

in such a human way. The prayer that characterized the choosing of Judas' replacement (Acts 2:24) and the commission of the seven (Acts 6:6) is strangely absent here. Divine guidance is neither sought explicitly, nor is it given explicitly.

Against this background, the statement in 15:28 seems all the more out of place: "for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to place upon you no greater burden than these essential things." The Holy Spirit, who is conspicuously absent in the description of the council's proceedings, receives pride of place in the council's letter.¹⁹⁴ The decision not to encumber Gentiles with Torah observance is a human

¹⁹⁴ The only exception to this is Peter's oblique reference when he says that God "bore witness to [the Gentiles], giving them the Holy Spirit" (15:8). It is interesting to note that neither Fitzmyer nor Tannehill even mention this discrepancy. Johnson also glosses over this kink in the narrative: "The invocation of the Holy Spirit as a partner to the decision has an odd sound to contemporary ears, but it nicely captures the dynamics of the process as portrayed by Luke. For similar language establishing an interplay between the activity of humans and of the Holy Spirit, see Acts 13:1-3" (*Acts*, 277). The point is, however, that this inclusion of the Spirit as some sort of an afterthought is *not at all* the way that Luke portrays the Spirit's involvement elsewhere in the narrative. Ironically, the very passage cited by Johnson provides an excellent case in point. The Spirit does intervene in 13:1-3. In that context of worshiping and fasting, the Spirit intervenes *verbally*.

Barrett's conclusion about 15:28 is interesting: "The apostles and elders are now joined in their decision by the Holy Spirit" (*Acts*, 744). After stating that this addition fits with Luke's understanding of the guidance of the Spirit in the life of the church, he explains away the problem by arguing that the church is simply reflecting a decision already made by the Spirit. Unfortunately, Barrett's only mention of the discrepancy is incomplete and disturbingly unclear: "Luke does not claim that any of the participants in the discussion was, when he spoke, moved, or filled, by the Holy Spirit. Whether the claim that the Holy Spirit on this occasion spoke through the church is affected by the fact that Paul (it seems) did not accept the decision is a question that should be borne in mind with regard to such ecclesiastical assertions" (*Acts*, 744).

In his narrative-critical examination of the Holy Spirit as a character in Luke-Acts, Shepherd offers a solution that is equally unhelpful: "Here Luke presents both the Spirit and the church jointly as direct actors; the Spirit is directly involved in this conflict, and takes a side. James is certainly correct to invoke the Holy Spirit in his decision, for it is precisely the direct action of that Spirit which has brought the church to this decision" (*Narrative Function*, 218). Shepherd is here referring especially to the role of the Spirit in Acts 8 and 10: "The Spirit picked up (literally!) and moved the community outside the boundaries of Jerusalem and Judea" (218). This explanation would be far more satisfying if the sentence in 15:28-29 were worded differently. Instead, the text states: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to place upon you no greater burden than these essential things: to keep away from things polluted by idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality." What "seems good to the Holy Spirit" here sounds astonishingly close to what James himself decided in 15:19-20: "Therefore *I* have made the determination not to add difficulty to those among the Gentiles who have turned to God, but we should instruct

decision in the earlier narrative (διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω [15:19]),¹⁹⁵ a point further underscored by the absence of any mention of the Holy Spirit in the reference to this decision in Acts 21:25. The prominence given to the Spirit in v. 28 belies the fact that the Spirit's collaboration is absent from the decision-making process. Taken in context, this reference seems almost an afterthought—the rhetorical inclusion of God's perceived approval. In turn, this inclusion of the Spirit for seemingly rhetorical purposes calls into question other passages that present a tension between human decisions and human perceptions of God's will.

The Spirit and Testimony (Acts 19:21 and 20:22–23)

After describing how “the word of the Lord triumphed”¹⁹⁶ over evil spirits and magical practices in Ephesus, the narrator states that Paul “resolved in the Spirit”¹⁹⁷ to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and

them by letter to abstain from the defilement of idols, from sexual immorality, from that which has been strangled, and from blood.”

¹⁹⁵ To be sure, this human decision is based on what the characters have experienced as God's deeds among them (15:7–8, 12, and 14). My point here is that the decision itself is something that the characters reason out without explicit divine intervention. The human aspect of this decision is reemphasized in 15:22 (“It seemed good to the apostles and elders, along with the whole congregation, to send men chosen from among them...”). Tannehill regards this as “[referring] to an official decision, taken collegially” (*Narrative Unity*, 192).

¹⁹⁶ See Acts 19:10 and 19:20.

¹⁹⁷ Barrett translates this phrase “Paul *formed the intention* to pass through Macedonia” (*Acts*, 919 [emphasis mine]). He argues that “ἔθετο alone could hardly mean ‘purposed’, so that τῷ πνεύματι cannot be taken to refer to the Holy Spirit ... though this would accord with other passages in which Paul's plans are said to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (e.g. 16:6)” (919). Fitzmyer's rendering is a mixture of apparent contradiction. He translates the phrase as “Paul made up his mind to travel through Macedonia” (*Acts*, 645). In his comments on 19:8–22, however, he states: “What is important to note is the guidance of the Spirit (19:21)” (646). Adding to the confusion are his notes on the actual verse: “It does not mean, ‘he purposed in the Spirit’, as Bruce (*Acts*, 393) renders it; nor does it mean that Paul decides ‘under the guidance of the Spirit’, *pace* Marshall (*Acts*, 312). The clause has to be compared with *tithesthai en te kardia*, ‘resolve in one's heart’ (5:4; Luke 21:14)” (*Acts*, 652).

Johnson and Tannehill are willing to leave the question more open ended. Although he translates the phrase “Paul decided to travel through Macedonia” (*Acts*, 345), Johnson states: “it [is] uncertain whether Luke intends us to read this simply as Paul ‘decided within himself’ or ‘proposed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit’” (346). Tannehill observes: “Although the phrase ... could refer either to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit, there is reason to believe that the latter is at least included. It would be strange to attribute the journey to Jerusalem to a human decision while linking his trip to Rome to divine necessity” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:239). Menzies twice cites this verse

on to Jerusalem (19:21). This passage marks the beginning of Paul's "return to Jerusalem," a journey that will raise questions and conflict between Paul and other believers. The drama of this resolution is heightened in Paul's address to the Ephesian elders in the next chapter: καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι πορεύομαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ συναντήσοντά μοι μὴ εἰδώς, πλὴν ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κατὰ πόλιν διαμαρτύρεται μοι λέγον ὅτι δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις με μένουσιν ("Now, behold, having been bound to the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen there, but in every city the Holy Spirit testifies to me saying that chains and suffering await me" [20:22–23]).

There can be little doubt that this testimony of the Spirit echoes back to the declarations of the Lord to Saul ("you will be told what you must do" [9:6]) and Ananias ("I myself will show him how much it is necessary for him to suffer for the sake of my name" [9:16]). Certainly, the reader would recall these predictions of suffering—predictions that created narrative suspense—when Paul is stoned and left for dead in Acts 14, and when he is beaten and imprisoned in Acts 16. It is only in Acts 20:23, however, that one finds another reference associating the divine will with this suffering. Given the references to Paul's impending suffering in Acts 9, these references to Paul's return to Jerusalem and the suffering that await him are hardly surprising. What is surprising are the descriptions of the Spirit's counter-testimony in Acts 21.

The Spirit and Counter-testimony (Acts 21:4, 11–14)

The statements in Acts 19 and 20 about Paul's resolution "in the Spirit" and his captivity "to the Spirit" have understandably been interpreted by a number of scholars as an indication that God is initiating, and Paul is accepting, his ultimate destiny.¹⁹⁸ A thorough inquiry of God's plan, God's will, and events initiated by God in Luke-Acts, however, must take into account the subtle counterevidence mentioned in Acts 21.

Early in the chapter "we" arrive in Tyre. The narrative then states rather simply: ἀνευρόντες δὲ τοὺς μαθητὰς ἐπεμείναμεν αὐτοῦ ἡμέρας

as an example of the Spirit's guidance (*Development*, 224 n. 2 and 227 n. 2). Lampe made a similar claim decades earlier ("The Holy Spirit," 196). Agreeing with both, Campbell makes a compelling case for reading "Spirit" rather than "spirit" both on lexicographical and contextual grounds ("Who are We," 172–173 n. 65). This reading maintains both the correlation and tension with other references to the Spirit in the subsequent narrative; see especially 20:22–23, compared with 21:4 and 21:11–14.

¹⁹⁸ See, for example, Gaventa, *Acts*, 268–269 and 286–287.

ἑπτὰ, οἵτινες τῷ Παύλῳ ἔλεγον διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος μὴ ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (21:4). This verse is somewhat difficult to translate because of the placement of the relative clause.¹⁹⁹ One could render it, “We stayed there seven days, having found disciples who were telling Paul through the Spirit not to embark for Jerusalem.” Such a translation, however, suggests a causal relationship between the Spirit-founded message of the disciples and the length of Paul’s (“our”) stay. One also wants to avoid the uniform tense rendering of the NRSV: “We looked up the disciples and stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they *told* Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.”²⁰⁰ This translation renders the relative clause adequately (i.e., without the causal relationship), but does not sufficiently capture the on-going past action of the imperfect ἔλεγον. Luke’s use of this imperfect stands in contrast to the aorists earlier in the verse: “*Having found* the disciples, we *remained* there seven days. [During that time, the disciples] *were telling* Paul through the Spirit not to embark for Jerusalem.” Whether or not Luke’s use of the imperfect suggests a resulting “conflict” between the characters,²⁰¹ it does emphasize that this message, uttered “through the Spirit,” was given more than once. The import of these two very different messages from the Spirit is paramount for this discussion.²⁰² Since the Holy Spirit is asso-

¹⁹⁹ The awkwardness of the KJV demonstrates this nicely: “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”

²⁰⁰ Emphasis mine.

²⁰¹ Gaventa suggests: “Luke does not treat it as a conflict, and it may be that the disciples’ pleas largely underscore the danger and the fact that Paul continues undeterred” (*Acts*, 292–293).

²⁰² This logical problem caused a number of nineteenth and twentieth century scholars to doubt the historical veracity of this verse. That is, if the disciples really told Paul “through the Spirit” not to go to Jerusalem, and if Paul went to Jerusalem anyway, how can this text be viewed in any other way than Paul going against the command of the Spirit (see the discussion of earlier scholarship in Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 602–604). More recently, scholars have found other ways to read around this conflict. Johnson, for example, regards 21:4 and 21:11 as evidence of that “the Holy Spirit ... continues to ‘witness in every city’ to him concerning what awaits him” (*Acts*, 372). This interpretation could stand in relation to 21:11, but not in relation to 21:4. In 21:4, Luke does not say that the Spirit is “witnessing” what awaits Paul; it says that disciples told Paul “through the Spirit” not to go to Jerusalem. Tannehill finds another explanation: “This is an interesting case of conflict in understanding the Spirit’s directions. The conflict can, of course, be reduced to the human level... Perhaps the Spirit’s message is consistent, but the prophets in Tyre have mixed their own conclusion with the Spirit’s message” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:263; see also Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 518). Tannehill then addresses the issue of interpretation more specifically: “Nevertheless, it is interesting that the narrator has allowed to surface at least a superficial contradiction in the divine

ciated with God in the narrative,²⁰³ it is crucial to highlight those points in the narrative that suggest conflicting viewpoints originating from the *same Spirit*.

This conflict continues in the immediate narrative context. A few verses after the Tyrian disciples tell Paul, “through the Spirit,” not to embark for Jerusalem, the Judean prophet Agabus meets Paul and company in Caesarea with a more illustrative message:

21:11 καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἄρας τὴν ζώνην τοῦ Παύλου, δῆσας ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εἶπεν· τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· τὸν ἄνδρα οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ ζώνη αὕτη, οὕτως δῆσουσιν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ παραδώσουσιν εἰς χεῖρας ἐθνῶν. 12 ὥς δὲ ἠκούσαμεν ταῦτα, παρεκαλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ οἱ ἐντόπιοι τοῦ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ. 13 τότε ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Παῦλος· τί ποιεῖτε κλαίοντες καὶ συνθρύπτοντές μου τὴν καρδίαν; ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐ μόνον δεθῆναι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποθανεῖν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐτοιμῶς ἔχω ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. 14 μὴ πειθομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἡσυχάσαμεν εἰπόντες· τοῦ κυρίου τὸ θέλημα γινέσθω.

21:11 Coming to us and taking Paul’s belt, he bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit: ‘In this way, the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man whose belt this is, and betray him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard these things, we and the local residents urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “what are you doing, crying and breaking my heart? I stand ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 Since he would not be persuaded, we were silent, saying, “the Lord’s will be done.”

This more elaborate warning to stay away from Jerusalem is also given as an utterance of the Holy Spirit. The narrator does not describe the reactions of Paul or his companions to the Tyrians’ message. The testimony of Agabus, on the other hand, inspires Paul’s company and the local believers to exhort Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Paul’s own reply, that he is ready even to die “for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus,” may lead to silence,²⁰⁴ but not to resolution: “Since he would not be persuaded, we were silent, saying, ‘the Lord’s will be done.’” This last statement maintains the tension between these two

guidance that Paul is receiving, an indication that it is seldom easy to separate divine revelation from human interpretation. Appeal to divine guidance is not an easy escape from the ambiguities of human life” (*Narrative Unity*, 2:263).

²⁰³ See, for example, Acts 2:17.

²⁰⁴ Luke uses the verb ἡσυχάζω four times, twice to describe the silencing of opposition (Luke 14:4; Acts 11:18). He also uses it, however, more neutrally for the “quiet” of keeping the Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

opposing viewpoints while also capturing the spiritual element behind the conflict. Both Paul and those trying to persuade him present their actions as being in accordance with the Spirit.

The Lord tells Paul to stay in Corinth (Acts 18:9–11)

After Paul's speech on the Areopagus in Acts 17, he makes his way to Corinth. In his customary fashion, he begins his proclamation among Jews and Gentiles who are presumably connected with the synagogue.²⁰⁵ When the Jews oppose Paul and blaspheme, he decides to turn his attention to evangelizing the Gentiles (18:6). It is in this context that Paul experiences his next vision:

9 Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος ἐν νυκτὶ δι' ὁράματος τῷ Παύλῳ· μὴ φοβοῦ, ἀλλὰ λάλει καὶ μὴ σιωπήσῃς, 10 διότι ἐγώ εἰμι μετὰ σοῦ καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιθήσεται σοὶ τοῦ κακῶσαι σε, διότι λαὸς ἐστὶ μοι πολὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ. 11 Ἐκάθισεν δὲ ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ μῆνας ἕξ διδάσκων ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.

9 Through a dream in the night, the Lord said to Paul, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you and no one will lay a hand upon you to harm you. Indeed, there are many people for me in this city." 11 He stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

On the surface, this vision serves the important, albeit fairly obvious, role of a divine directive for Paul's shift of mission to the Gentiles in Corinth.²⁰⁶ Also obvious is Paul's obedience, as indicated by the length of his stay mentioned immediately in v. 11. More interesting and less obvious are the subtleties of this vision and its place in the broader narrative context.

In v. 9, the Lord's first words to Paul are "do not be afraid." The assuaging of fear so common in the visions of Luke's Gospel, but largely absent in those of Acts, takes on quite a new meaning here. There is no indication that the vision itself inspires fear, as it does for Zechariah, the shepherds, and Cornelius (Luke 1:12; 2:9; Acts 10:4). Instead, the antithesis "do not be afraid, but speak," taken in the immediate narrative context of the maltreatment of Paul and others,²⁰⁷ suggests that the fear mentioned here is the fear of other humans and

²⁰⁵ Acts 18:4, 7.

²⁰⁶ Robert C. Tannehill, "Rejection by Jews and Turning to Gentiles: The Pattern of Paul's Mission in Acts," in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. Joseph B. Tyson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 90.

²⁰⁷ See, for example, Acts 16:19–24, 17:1–9.

their potentially violent reactions to the proclamation of the gospel.²⁰⁸ Because fear is common enough in visionary accounts of antiquity to be regarded by some as part of their “form,”²⁰⁹ the change in meaning here is all the more compelling. Whereas those at the beginning of the narrative fear God’s irruptive visions, the narrative now assumes that the reasonable object of fear might be those people who oppose God’s plan.²¹⁰

This dream-vision also creates some tension with Paul’s “Temple vision” related later in Acts 22:17–21. In Paul’s first retelling of his conversion, the most significant departure from the original narration of Acts 9 is Paul’s description of a vision he has in the Temple, in which the Lord tells Paul that the people of Jerusalem will not listen to his testimony, and that he is therefore being sent “far away to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:17–21). As noted in the discussion of this passage above, this part of Paul’s retelling does not simply modify the original story (Acts 9:3–19), but rewrites it entirely. Paul recasts his rescue by the Jerusalem believers (9:29–30) as a directive from the Lord. This is all the more remarkable, given that Paul *does* have a visionary experience in which God directs him to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles here in 18:9–11.²¹¹ Since the character Paul receives this divine directive in 18:9–11, why does he invent a Temple vision in his later filtration of these events (22:17–21)? The answer would seem to lie in rhetorical necessity. In Acts 22, Paul’s defense includes his reason for leaving Jerusalem in the first place. Telling the angry mob what actually happened—that he left because he had instilled a murderous rage in the Hellenistic Jews of Jerusalem—would hardly be effective (Acts 9:29). Neither would it work to tell them that the Lord had directed him to witness to the Gentiles in Corinth (18:9–11). This would not explain why he was in Corinth to begin with. Paul’s creation of a vision in the Temple of Jerusalem—a vision in which the Lord directs Paul to the Gentiles—serves the rhetorical purposes of Paul’s defense speech in Acts 22 in a way that the events of 9:29–30 and 18:9–11 could not.

²⁰⁸ See also Gaventa, *Acts*, 258.

²⁰⁹ See the discussion in chapter 4 (pp. 114–115 above).

²¹⁰ As some commentators have noted, this sort of command not to fear and the reassurance of God’s presence more closely reflect assurances in prophetic passages like Isa 41:10 (see, for example, Johnson, *Acts*, 324).

²¹¹ Although there is nothing about the Gentiles in the vision of 18:9–11, the preceding context (18:1–8) indicates that Paul has been rejected by the Jews in Corinth, and that he is shifting the primary focus of his proclamation to Gentiles.

Sadducees, Pharisees, and a Vision of the Lord (Acts 23:8–11)

In Acts 23, Paul is brought before the council of the high priest. “Knowing that part [of the council] were of the Sadducees, but the other part were of the Pharisees,” Paul makes a statement that will divide the crowd: “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am being judged on account of hope and the resurrection of the dead” (23:6). To explain the division that results between the Pharisees and Sadducees, the narrator offers the following explanation: “For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit, whereas the Pharisees acknowledge all of these” (23:8). Paul focuses on one of these, the resurrection, but it is a group of Pharisaic scribes that bring up the other two, saying, “we find nothing evil in this man; what if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” (23:9). The statement of the scribes is emphasized even more in the textual addition found in the Majority²¹² text: “we find nothing evil in this man; what if a spirit or an angel spoke to him? *We should not fight against God!*” This passage that raises the question of belief in various forms of divine revelation is punctuated by Paul’s vision in 23:11. Alluding to Paul’s resolution in the Spirit that he would return to Jerusalem and then go on to Rome (19:21), this vision stands in contrast to the conflict of 23:8–9. The Sadducees disagree with the Pharisees on the existence of spirits and angels. Even those who defend Paul only raise the question whether *a* spirit or angel spoke to him. Paul’s experience transcends all of this, as the Lord tells him directly, “Have courage. As you bore witness to me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome” (23:11). The reader is given no indication of Paul’s immediate reaction to this vision, but the necessity of his courage is underscored in the next few verses, which tell of a Jewish plot to assassinate him. There is evidence that Paul has taken courage. When Paul was first arrested, his address to the tribune was quite deferential: εἰ ἔξεστίν μοι εἰπεῖν τι πρὸς σέ; (“is it permissible for me to speak to you?” [21:37]). When he learns of the plot from his nephew, however, “Paul called one of centurions and said, ‘take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to report to him’” (προσκαλεσάμενος δὲ ὁ Παῦλος ἕνα τῶν ἑκατονταρχῶν ἔφη· τὸν νεανίαν τοῦτον ἀπάγαγε πρὸς τὸν χιλίαρχον, ἔχει γὰρ ἀπαγγεῖλαι τι αὐτῷ [23:17]). Paul uses the imperative: he actually *commands* one of the centurions to take his nephew to the tribune.

²¹² This variant reading is also found in the Sahidic tradition.

Paul's Vision at Sea (Acts 27:23–24)

For the most part, dream-visions in Luke-Acts have been supplied by the narrator, and then sometimes reported by the recipient as well.²¹³ In this case, the focus shifts entirely to Paul's presentation of his vision. The vision and its report come after a storm, lasting several days, has threatened death for those on the ship that carries Paul toward Rome. More specifically, this dream-vision occurs when "all hope of our being saved was being abandoned" (27:20). Paul's vision report is framed by exhortations to courage and his declaration of his own faith in the veracity of the vision:

27:22 καὶ τὰ νῦν παραινῶ ὑμᾶς εὐθυμεῖν· ἀποβολὴ γὰρ ψυχῆς οὐδεμία ἔσται ἐξ ὑμῶν πλὴν τοῦ πλοίου. 23 παρέστη γάρ μοι ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗ εἰμι [ἐγώ] ὃ καὶ λατρεύω, ἄγγελος 24 λέγων μὴ φοβοῦ, Παῦλε, Καίσαρι σε δεῖ παραστῆναι, καὶ ἰδοὺ κεχάρισται σοι ὁ θεὸς πάντας τοὺς πλέοντας μετὰ σοῦ. 25 διὸ εὐθυμεῖτε, ἄνδρες· πιστεύω γὰρ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι οὕτως ἔσται καθ' ὃν τρόπον λελάληται μοι.

27:22 Now then, I urge you to take courage. For there will be no loss of life among you, only the loss of the ship. 23 There stood by me this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul, it is necessary that you stand before Caesar. Behold, God has shown favor to all the ones sailing with you on your account." 25 Therefore, take courage, gentlemen. For I trust God that things will turn out the way I have been told.

As with the vision in Acts 18:9–11, the assurance not to fear in v. 24 has nothing to do with fear inspired by the dream.²¹⁴ Once again, Paul is assured that he need not fear his circumstances. Instead, the vision itself functions as a confirmation of God's power over the forces of nature, and of the certainty that God's purpose (δεῖ [27:24]) will be fulfilled. It would be a mistake, however, to ignore the subtle ways in which this vision report serves to highlight the figure of Paul. The is one of the few passages in Luke-Acts in which the reader encounters a dream-vision described solely through a character filter.²¹⁵ Furthermore, the vision

²¹³ One exception is the cryptic report of Jesus in Luke 10:18 ("I was watching Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lighting"), discussed in chapter 4.

²¹⁴ Squires appears to conflate all of the visionary references to fear in Luke-Acts, missing the important distinction between the assurances not to fear the visionary experience (found primarily in the Gospel) and assurances not to fear other circumstances (*Plan of God*, 119 n. 83).

²¹⁵ See also the vision of Jesus in Luke 10:18, and the vision of Stephen in Acts 7:56.

itself suggests that the people on the ship are saved only on account of Paul (κεχάρισταί σοι ὁ θεὸς πάντας τοὺς πλέοντας μετὰ σοῦ). Everything depends on the plan of God, and the importance of Paul's role within that plan.²¹⁶ This emphasis is underscored by Paul's response to the vision in v. 25: "take courage ... for I trust God."²¹⁷

Conclusion

The Acts of the Apostles presents an array of dream-vision scenes, featuring a variety of visionary agents and an even wider variety of character responses. These responses to visionary experiences can be plotted along a broad spectrum in terms of the extent to which the characters interact with the information they receive as visionary revelation. At one end of this spectrum is the story of Philip (Acts 8:26–40), and at the other is Paul's vision at Troas. The divine direction in Acts 8:26, and Philip's automatic obedience to it, are literally overpowering: the scene culminates with the Spirit physically relocating Philip from the Gaza road to Azotus. In this story, the reader sees little or no active interpretation on Philip's part. One could view a number of other visionary encounters in a similar light. The vision of the angelic messengers (1:10–12), the angelic rescue of the imprisoned apostles (5:19–21), and the visions of assurance to Paul (18:9–11; 23:8–11; and 27:23–24), all fall into the category of dream-visions that are believed quickly and interpreted minimally.

²¹⁶ By no means am I suggesting that Paul is featured in this story in a heroic way (see also Gaventa, *Acts*, 353). I am merely suggesting that this story highlights both the role of God and the role of God's "chosen instrument."

²¹⁷ Although this is the last vision conforming to the criteria discussed in the introduction, the Maltese natives in Acts 28 make an epiphanic reference similar to that of the Lystrans in Acts 14 (see pp. 222–223 above): "They waited for him to begin to swell up, or all of a sudden to fall down dead. But after waiting a long time and seeing that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds, saying, 'he is a god'" (28:6). The Maltese natives display fickleness similar to the Lystrans, only in reverse. A viper escaping the brush being thrown on the fire bites Paul on the hand. The natives first decide that Paul must be a murderer; he might have escaped from the sea, but justice will not allow him to live (28:4). After Paul shakes the viper from his hand and continues to exhibit no signs of harm, the Maltese natives decide he is a god. After the clothes-rending gyrations and evangelism that follow this misperception in Lystra, the reader would expect some similar denial. Instead, there is no attempt whatsoever to disabuse the natives of their misunderstanding. Instead, the narrative shifts quickly to reception provided by Publius.

Moving along this spectrum, the reader finds characters interpreting their experiences in ways that demonstrate their perception of God's will to a more significant degree. In the Pentecost episode, for example, Peter interprets the manifestations of the filling of the Holy Spirit as the pouring out prophesied in Joel. After the Holy Spirit's command in 13:2, the Antioch believers respond with fasting and prayer before sending Paul and Barnabas on their way.

Most interesting for the present discussion are the visionary encounters nearing the other end of the spectrum—vision scenes in which characters interpret their experiences more extensively. In two of the central stories of Acts, the conversion/call of Saul and the Cornelius–Peter episode, descriptions of the ways in which characters interpret their experiences, and thereby perceive the will of God, are a matter of great concern in the narrative—requiring significantly more narrative time than the visions themselves. The narrative time devoted to the characters' filtered interpretation of events underscores the importance of these interpretations within Luke's story. It is in these filtered interpretations that one is able to see the characters attempting to perceive the will of God based upon their dream-visions. What is so striking about these episodes is the way in which the characters' subsequent experiences affect their theological interpretation of past (distant or recent) visionary encounters.

As noted in chapter 3, the far end of the spectrum is represented by Paul's vision at Troas—an encounter in which God never appears *except* in the characters' interpretation of the experience. More difficult to place, but perhaps also more important for the present discussion, are those passages in which characters perceive God's will differently. This issue arises in the different interpretations of the Spirit's guidance in Acts 19:21 and 20:22–23 versus Acts 21:4, 11–14. Commentators have tended to gloss over these differences precisely because they create a very shocking image: God guiding people in contradictory ways. More than in any other context of Luke-Acts, these various interpretations of the Spirit's guidance highlight the importance of understanding the variety of attitudes toward dream-visions in the ancient world. Although it is still jarring to find characters interpreting the Spirit's message in contradictory ways, these contradictions are more understandable when one realizes the extent to which it was common to view dream-visions with suspicion in antiquity. Thus, neither the believers in Tyre nor Agabus simply accept Paul's intention to go to Jerusalem. Instead, they urge him not to go based on their own Spirit-guided

understanding of what will happen. The end of the scene in 21:14 is significant: Paul is not persuaded, but neither are the believers. Their only resolution is to leave the matter to God: “God’s will be done.” Far from obviating the role of human discernment in Luke’s narrative, the dream-visions of Acts often inspire dramatic interpretation—even conflicting interpretations—as the characters struggle to perceive God’s will.

CONCLUSION

This study has been inductive in nature, looking broadly at the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts. It remains, therefore, to sketch some of the implications of this investigation and to suggest some possibilities for future research. Following a brief summary of the present examination, I will discuss the importance of dream-visions for understanding Luke's theology and anthropology—for understanding the interaction between the divine and the human in Luke-Acts. This discussion, in turn, will raise issues that require further attention.

Summary

Despite the frequency with which Luke employs dream-visions in his narrative, there have been remarkably few studies examining this feature of Luke-Acts. Most of the studies that have analyzed this element of Luke's story have been content with general conclusions regarding the way in which dream-visions demonstrate God's direction and the importance of God's plan in the narrative. As noted in the introduction, this is a significant point, but also one that reduces all of the scenes with dream-visions in Luke-Acts to their lowest common denominator. Others have criticized the implication of dream-visions for Lukan theology, claiming that these scenes portray divine compulsion and the exclusion of human theological discernment. This criticism begs the question: To what extent do the dream-visions in Luke-Acts obviate the role of human discernment and interpretation? Framed in a more positive manner, this question has provided the impetus for the present discussion: What is the relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke-Acts?

I have argued that many evaluations—both positive and negative—of Luke's dream-visions are based to some extent on the assumption that dream-visions were viewed unequivocally as divine revelation in the ancient world. The analysis in chapter 1 challenges this assumption, highlighting evidence that demonstrates a remarkable variety of attitudes toward dream-visions in antiquity. Although the major-

ity of extant data do indicate an acceptance of dream-visions as vehicles of revelation, the body of contrary evidence is far too large to ignore. Based on the diversity of the evidence, the present study suggests two interrelated conclusions. First, ancient texts featuring dream-visions must be evaluated on an individual basis to determine whether and to what extent they support the idea that dream-visions are revelatory. Second, all such texts should be read with both the positive and negative evaluations of dream-visions in the broader culture in mind. The second part of this conclusion is particularly important for a text like Luke-Acts. Although the view of dream-visions in Luke's narrative is consistently positive, understanding the variety of attitudes toward this phenomenon in the ancient world may illumine certain parts of the narrative. For example, knowing that ancients often viewed dream-visions with uncertainty may help the reader understand better the tension found in Acts 19 and 21, texts in which different characters in Luke's narrative interpret the guidance of the Holy Spirit in very contradictory ways.

Of all Luke's dream-vision scenes, I have suggested that Paul's vision at Troas (Acts 16:9–10) is worthy of special attention because it differs from Luke's other dream-visions in a number of interesting ways. The research surveyed in chapter 2 agrees generally with the characters in Luke's narrative. That is, most commentators follow Luke's characters in assuming that the vision offers a divine directive, despite the absence of a divine figure in the vision itself. The majority of Luke's dream-visions feature an angelic intermediary. Paul's dream-vision at Troas, on the other hand, features a "Macedonian male." God is not mentioned until the characters *interpret* Paul's experience: "we immediately sought to go to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them" (Acts 16:10). The survey in chapter 2 also indicates that the studies of dream-visions in Luke-Acts, and in ancient literature, typically have ignored ways in which human characters actively interpret these visionary experiences.

Chapter 3 provides an extended discussion of Paul's vision at Troas (Acts 16:9–10). This vision breaks a certain tension that Luke develops in Acts 16:6–8. In vv. 6–8, Paul and his companions are prevented by the Holy Spirit from proclaiming the gospel in Asia, and prevented by the "Spirit of Jesus" from entering Bithynia. They are even more enthusiastic, therefore, to follow what they interpret as God's call to proclaim the good news in Macedonia (εὐθὺς ἐζητήσαμεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς Μακεδονίαν ["we *immediately* sought to go to Macedonia"]). After

this building tension and resolution in the narrative, Paul's experience in Macedonia seems anticlimactic. Paul and his companions have only limited success, a trend that does not change until they leave Macedonia—without the impetus of a “divine directive”—and travel south to Achaia (Athens and Corinth [Acts 17–18]). The lackluster results of their journey to Macedonia do not *prove* that the characters have interpreted Paul's dream-vision incorrectly. Nevertheless, there is a tension in the narrative between what the characters *perceive* as a divine directive, and the limited success they *experience* in their Macedonian mission.

A similar tension is found in the visions of Luke's Gospel, especially those contained in the infancy narrative. Chapter 4 of this study examines the variety of dream-visions in Luke. The angelic appearances to both Zechariah and Mary, combined with their respective interpretations of these visionary experiences, provide excellent examples of “character filtration,” a term used in narrative criticism to distinguish events described by a character in the story from those described by the narrator. Both of these characters interpret God's will in light of their visions. These interpretations, in turn, establish expectations that are not fulfilled in the larger narrative. The work of Shadi Bartsch has proven helpful for understanding this question of unfulfilled expectations. Focusing on the use of dreams in the Greek novels of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, Bartsch has demonstrated that characters in these narratives often misinterpret dreams initially in such a way that the reader is also temporarily misled. As the story continues, both the characters and the reader realize that the dream means something other than what they first assume. I have argued that something similar occurs with the interpretations of Mary and Zechariah. Both characters interpret their visions in terms that reflect common first-century expectations of the Davidic messiah—expectations involving impending reversals of power in the human realm. Later in the story, however, Luke appropriates the language found in the Magnificat and Benedictus in ways that reshape these expectations, underscoring the importance of God's power and authority. A number of the subsequent dream-visions in the Gospel serve to highlight Jesus' own understanding of what it means to be the Son of God (e.g., the temptation [Luke 4:1–13]) and provide divine authentication for his ministry (e.g., the baptism [Luke 3:21–22]). Other scenes with dream-visions reveal that the characters in Luke's narrative have difficulty perceiving the will of God even when their visionary experiences include

specific directives from God. There is a complex relationship between dream-visions and the perception of God's will in Luke's Gospel. In some cases, characters respond automatically, assuming that what they have been told has already come to pass (e.g., the shepherds [Luke 2:8–20]). In others, the characters struggle to understand their circumstances, despite divine revelation (e.g., Peter, John, and James [Luke 9:28–36]).

This variety of response is perhaps even more pronounced in the Acts of the Apostles. Chapter 5 examines the different ways in which characters respond to and interpret their visionary experiences in Acts. In some cases, characters simply accept their visionary messages with little or no interpretation of the experience. Philip provides an extreme example in his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40), but other scenes display a similar disregard for interpretation (e.g., the angelic rescue of the imprisoned apostles [Acts 5:19–21], and the visions of assurance to Paul [Acts 18:9–11; 23:8–11; 27:23–24]). In other passages, one finds characters responding to visions with initial doubt or confusion, and later interpreting these same experiences in dramatic fashion. Saul's vision on the road to Damascus (9:1–19; 22:6–21; 26:12–18) and the Cornelius–Peter episode (10:1 – 11:18) provide the best examples of this level of character interpretation. In between these two extremes, one finds an array of responses to visionary encounters in Acts—an array that even includes contradictory interpretations of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:21 and 20:22–23; cf. 21:4, 11–14).

Viewed broadly, Luke's use of dream-visions resists simple classification, forming instead a spectrum of experience. On one end of this spectrum are those dream-visions involving a significant amount of character interpretation. In these episodes, the character's interpretive actions serve an important role in the developing story, sometimes involving an element of unpredictability. On the other end of the spectrum are dream-visions that emphasize divine irruption to the exclusion of human interpretation. In these stories, characters typically do exactly as they are told without expressing any doubt or confusion, and without making any attempt to understand their experience beyond the simple acceptance of divine direction. At one end stands Paul's vision at Troas. At the other stands the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, a narrative in which the divine role is emphasized so strongly that the Spirit even physically relocates Philip at the end of the episode.

The Importance and Function of Dream-Visions in Luke-Acts

The sheer frequency of dream-visions in Luke-Acts suggests that they are important for Luke. The question is, why? What is the advantage of presenting the story of God, Jesus, the Spirit, and the early followers of Jesus in this particular way? Could Luke have told the story without these visionary encounters? Looking at one of Luke's presumed sources, the Gospel of Mark, one could argue that dream-visions need not be an integral part of such a story. The answers to these questions should, of course, be sought organically in the way that dream-visions function in Luke's narrative. What, then, do dream-visions add to Luke's narrative?

The present examination has noted a number of studies that emphasize the importance of God and the theme of the plan of God in Luke-Acts.¹ Indeed, this narrative is about God and the active role of God in human events. Luke's use of dream-visions further highlights this element of the story by underscoring the irruptive nature of God's actions. Angels appear to characters with divine messages. A voice from heaven confirms that Jesus is the Son of God. The risen Lord confronts a persecutor of the Way. The Spirit commissions individuals to proclaim the good news. Dream-visions, therefore, reveal a significant element in Luke's theology: Luke's dream-visions provide vivid imagery depicting God at work *within* the scenes of human history, and suggest a broader understanding of God at work *behind* the scenes of human history. One could stop there. The way that dream-visions facilitate Luke's depiction of God's involvement in human events provides sufficient reason for their inclusion in the story. Stopping at this point, however, only provides half of the answer.

As noted above, there is a spectrum of character response to the dream-visions in Luke-Acts. In some cases, the divine aspect of the dream-vision seems to overpower everything else. In others, however, human characters play a much more important interpretive role. Mary and Zechariah interpret angelic announcements about the birth of children in light of promises in Jewish Scripture: they interpret angelic revelation in the *present* in light of scriptural revelation of the *past*. Jesus answers temptations with his interpretation of what it means to be the Son of God. Peter interprets the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost in terms of the prophesied Day of the Lord, with all of

¹ See, for example, Cosgrove ("The Divine ΔΕΙ in Luke-Acts"), Squires (*Plan of God*), and Gaventa (*Acts*).

its eschatological implications. Paul interprets his initial vision of the risen Lord in light of his *subsequent* experience proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. In these passages, the reader encounters characters who—despite divine intervention—are left to work out the meaning of their visionary encounters. Mary is told that her son will be called “Son of the Most High” (1:32), but does not understand this son when he says that he must be about his father’s business (2:49). Nevertheless, this is not the last one hears of Mary. After the crisis of the passion and the bewilderment of the resurrection, Mary is found with Jesus’ disciples, devoting herself to prayer (Acts 1:14). Following his encounter with the risen Lord, Saul is left blind and helpless, able to see only in his prayer to God (Acts 9:11–12). It is only after devoting himself to proclaiming Jesus as the Christ that Saul, now Paul, describes this experience as a call to bear witness to the Gentiles (Acts 22:6–21). Peter is told three times that he is not to call profane that which God has cleansed, but in the wake of this vision Peter understands nothing; he is utterly “confused” (διαπορέω [Acts 10:15–17]). Only after hearing about the experience of Cornelius does Peter begin to understand (Acts 10:22–23). If it is important to notice that Luke-Acts is about God and the plan of God, it is equally important to notice that the story is also about God’s people and their attempt, their struggle, to understand God’s will. Without suggesting that these anthropological considerations overshadow Luke’s theological concerns, one may argue that Luke-Acts has a dual emphasis—an emphasis on both the divine and the human elements of the story. Luke’s use of dream-visions serves as the crux of this dual emphasis. This is what dream-visions add to Luke’s narrative: they allow him to describe both the divine and human elements of this interaction in poignant detail.

Suggestions for Future Research

Highlighting the intersection between Luke’s theology and anthropology, the dream-visions in Luke-Acts bring to the fore the larger issue of the relationship between the human and the divine. Offering a similar perspective based on different elements in the story, Bovon describes this relationship in the following way:

Forerunner and follower, John and the apostles—why are they indispensable? Does this depend on the nature of God’s activity? God’s deeds must be attested, beforehand by prophets and afterward by witnesses, *because*

they have not the power of proof and depend on the venture of faith. Even in the middle of time, God acts neither directly nor alone. For this reason, the beginnings of John and of Jesus run parallel. Human beings are called to work along with God. The people of God receive not only salvation; the participation God expects of them is also an expression of his compassion.²

Coming to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the divine and the human is of crucial importance for biblical theology. Although some studies have illuminated certain aspects of this issue,³ to my knowledge there has yet to be an extensive examination of this question. I hope the present investigation would contribute two points to such a discussion. First, the extent to which characters interpret their visionary encounters should serve to emphasize the importance placed on human perception and understanding in Luke-Acts. Second, any such study must take seriously the complexities found in Luke's depiction of the "filling of the Holy Spirit" and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁴ The ultimately unfulfilled expectations established by the Benedictus in Luke 1 and the tension between various leadings of the Spirit in Acts 19–21 complicate any attempt to argue that the "filling of the Holy Spirit" is simply a "mode of God's self-manifestation."⁵ The filling of the Holy Spirit does not ensure that Zechariah's interpretation will reflect the outcome of Luke's story, nor does the guidance of the Holy Spirit ensure unanimous agreement between Paul's perception of God's will and other believers' perceptions of God's will.

The study of dream-visions in antiquity is impeded by an unnecessary dearth of resources. For those interested in dreams and visions in the ancient world, there are a few helpful studies available in contemporary scholarship. Understandably, however, these studies approach the subject from a specific perspective and with particular questions. These perspectives and questions, in turn, determine the types of evidence that are presented. With diligence the devoted student can cull

² Bovon, *Luke 1*, 78 (emphasis mine).

³ Charles Cosgrove, for example, examines the relationship between *dei* ("it is necessary") and divine providence in Luke-Acts, coming to conclusions similar to those of the present study: "the picture of the church's mission in Acts accents the harmony of human and divine volition which governs its progress" ("The Divine *ΔΕΙ* in Luke-Acts," 187).

⁴ See the discussion of Zechariah being "filled with the Spirit" in chapter 4 (pp. 120–121 n. 28 above), and the discussion of the contradictory interpretations of the Spirit's guidance in Acts 19 and 21 in chapter 5.

⁵ Lampe, "Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," 161.

a sampling of references describing dream-visions in antiquity. What is lacking at the present time is a sourcebook providing literary and epigraphic evidence of dream-visions from the earliest Greek epic and ANE material down through the early centuries of the Common Era. Such a resource would make this material more easily accessible, both to students and to scholars.

Finally, this study also touches on questions pertaining to the rhetoric of revelation. Because divine revelation in biblical literature is so often presented in the form of dream-visions, this literary and historical phenomenon is at the heart of rhetorical claims to truth vis-à-vis the word of God.⁶ As the analysis in chapter 1 indicates, however, dream-visions were not viewed in a universally positive manner in antiquity. It would be intriguing, therefore, to examine more thoroughly the relationship between dream-visions and other rhetorical means for asserting truth claims in both the canonical and apocryphal material of the biblical witness.

⁶ Two important studies in this area are Dan O. Via's *The Revelation of God And/As Human Reception in the New Testament* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997 [unfortunately, Via does not include Luke-Acts in this study]); and Klaus Berger's *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (trans. Charles Muenchow; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003 [especially pertinent is chapter 6, "Perceptions," 82–127]).

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